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CAMERAS AND QUORUM: STUDENT REPS WALK OUT OF BoG MEETING • PAGE 06

WHAT OCCUPATION?

While some showed support for the occupiers by camping outside the james building, not everyone at McGill was enamored with them. PHOTO SAM SLOTNICK

#6party Ends at McGill

• PIERRE CHAUVIN

On Monday the occupiers were back, but this time, they were on the outside looking in.

Approximately 50 students gathered for two hours outside McGill University's James Administration Building in support of the sixth floor occupiers, who had been evicted the day before.

The occupation originally started on Feb. 7 when a group of 23 students entered the administration building for a "surprise resignation party" in honour of Deputy Provost Student Life and Learning Morton Mendelson.

Early Sunday morning, the McGill administration called the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal to assist with the eviction. The occupation was entering its fifth day with no end in sight as negotiations had stalled between the occupiers and the administration.

"The protestors told [McGill VP University Services James Nicell] that they were disconnecting the land line we provided and would not talk any more," wrote VP Administration and Finance Michael Di Grappa in an update to McGill students.

"After many [...] tactics to make the protestors uncomfortable in the space and after discussion of other options, we were no closer to a resolution."

Those tactics included cutting the occupiers' Internet access, electricity and eventually washroom facilities as time wore on.

"The administration never tried to negotiate with us," said an occupier who asked to be identified as Steve. "The man they sent to talk to us did not have the power to do anything—that's what he told us."

The eviction went peacefully according to both occupiers and the university. After being read a notice of eviction, they agreed to leave the premises, thus avoiding criminal charges for resisting arrest.

Later that day, the university released a "Protocol Regarding Demonstrations, Protests, and Occupations on McGill University Campuses."

The protocol establishes temporary rules and guidelines until the university officially responds to the Jutras Report, which was commissioned after riot police controversially entered the campus during another occupation of the building on Nov. 10.

One of the protocols deals with occupations, stating, "If any type of occupation occurs and the occupiers refuse to leave when requested to do so, civil authorities will be called."

It wasn't long before the protocol was disregarded, according to an occupier who asked only to be identified as Becca, referring to the support rally.

"Today we broke the protocol already, because we took the demonstration inside of a building, which was against it."

For Steve, the occupation was a success. He cited negotiations between the administration and student groups CKUT—McGill's campus radio station—and the McGill chapter of the Quebec Public Interest Research Group.

"We had people inside QPIRG, and they said that during our occupation, McGill was much more anxious to negotiate with QPIRG than they had been before."

"We proposed a tripartite meeting with the student occupiers, QPIRG and the administration to talk about a referendum question," said Simone Lucas, who sits on the QPIRG Board of Directors.

"That proposal was denied."

The occupation was a protest against a recent decision by the administration to invalidate the referendums held by CKUT and QPIRG, in which students had voted to institute an in-person opt-out system for the fee levies paid to the groups, effectively making it harder to opt out.

The administration had overruled the results of the election, saying the questions were unclear, as they dealt not just with the opt-out system, but also asked students if they supported maintaining the groups' fee levies in general.

"What was very clear was that the questions asked were not clear, because they were asking two separate things at the same time," said McGill's Director of Media Relations Doug Sweet.

The occupiers had two demands: that the referendum be recognized and that Mendelson resign.

"Of the administration, he is the one who is supposed to represent student interests directly, and he absolutely does not," said Becca.

The occupiers were not directly involved with either QPIRG nor CKUT.

"We made sure that [of] QPIRG and CKUT, none of them were involved, because we did not want the administration to be able to use this against those organizations," said Becca. "We were independent students who really care about those organizations."

Other students then decided to occupy the ground floor of the building in solidarity with those on the sixth floor. They left on Wednesday morning after having their access to the washroom cut off.

On Feb. 10, the administration announced it would recognize part of the CKUT referendum. The radio station will maintain its fee levy, but will have a new referendum regarding its opt-out system in March.

According to Caitlin Manicom, funding and outreach coordinator at CKUT, the agreement was reached before the beginning of the occupation. "CKUT played no role in organizing the occupation of the James Administration Building," said Manicom. "We were completely taken off-guard."

The occupation did not gather unanimous support from the McGill community. A Facebook event called "The James 6th Floor Occupiers do NOT Represent Me" counted approximately 2,100 attendees at press time.

Twitter was also the scene of heated discussions about the occupation. One person, tweeting from @OccupyMcGill, regularly criticized the occupiers, and spoke to *The Link* on condition of anonymity.

"It's another case of a small group of students taking over the dialogue and occupying a building," he said.

"I haven't seen the admin become more extreme. I have seen student groups become more extreme."

—with files from Riley Sparks

LOOKIN' AT THE LEVIES

Frigo Vert & 2110 Approved for Ballot

• COREY POOL
& ADAM KOVAC

Two student groups got permission to ask students for their cents at the Concordia Student Union Council meeting Feb. 8, as Le Frigo Vert and the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy were approved to appear on the March general election ballot.

"It's been something we've been hoping to do for the past few years," said Le Frigo Vert employee Bronwen Agnew of the eight-cent per credit increase, which would see the total they receive rise to 33 cents per credit.

"It's something we have to do, basically, as our fixed costs [such as rent and hydro bills] are going up. Also, [there's an increased] demand for the services, such as staff."

This isn't the first time that the food co-op has pursued an increase in the last few years. The group discussed a bid for the increase in the last November byelection, before opting not to pursue it. They had also made a bid in the March 2010 general election, which was voted down.

"Since the last election when we didn't get it, it's been a pretty barebones operation," said Agnew. "We've been running short-staffed. It's not a sustainable thing that we've done in terms of the budget cuts."

Though she admitted it was too soon to discuss campaign strategy, Agnew did say she feels optimistic that more students will vote in favour of the increase than in 2010.

> "It was close that time. The demand for our services goes up every year, so I guess there's more students supporting us every year."
>
> *–Bronwen Agnew*
> *Le Frigo Vert*

"It was close that time. The demand for our services goes up every year, so I guess there's more students supporting us every year."

Councilors also voted to include the question of a fee-levy increase to 2110.

Though the centre has submitted an application for a fee-levy, they have not yet made a decision as an organization on whether or not to go ahead with it, and declined to comment until after they meet later this week.

2110 reps did say that a decision on the fee-levy has not been made as an organization, but that the application was placed in order to keep the option open.

If they decide to proceed, they will be seeking a fee-levy increase of 10 cents per credit, raising their fee-levy from 29 cents to 39 cents.

Without a fee levy increase, Le Frigo Vert will continue to be a bare bones operation, said Bronwen Agnew. PHOTO ADAM KOVAC

A Boost From Beauvoir

Women's Studies Institute Opposes Tuition Increases

• ADAM KOVAC

Students opposed to tuition increases will get support from at least one corner of Concordia, as the Simone de Beauvoir Institute announced this week that they will support a planned general strike.

"It's a decision that's the official position of the Institute," said Viviane Namaste, a professor at the institute. "It went through our highest decision-making body, which is the coordinating committee."

The Institute held a press conference on Feb. 6 announcing that they oppose the tuition hikes because their research had shown that they would adversely affect women.

During a presentation at the Concordia Student Union Council meeting on Feb. 8, Simone de Beauvoir Institute student Gabrielle Bouchard explained that research had shown "the impact of the increase on women's lives will be significant."

She cited women earning less than men for the same work, as well as the high amount of part-time and mature students at Concordia, who are often single parents—80 per cent of whom are women.

Namaste noted that the decision was unanimous, and that the coordinating committee has representatives of full-time and part-time professors, as well as students and research associates. The decision also coincides with a vote scheduled for Feb. 29, when students enrolled in the Institute will decide whether or not to go on strike.

The Concordia administration has spoken in favour of the tuition hikes, a position which has put it at odds with student organizations such as the CSU. Namaste said that while the school was made aware of their stance, they have not received any direct feedback.

"We were in communication [with media relations] as we planned the press conference," she said. "They were aware we were going to announce our official position. I haven't heard any feedback officially from them.

"I'm confident that the university is a place of dialogue exchange and debate, and our administration recognizes that," she added.

"We knew they were against the tuition hike," said university spokesperson Chris Mota. "This is academic research, and this is what they say their research has shown. It has nothing to do with the university's position."

Although she declined to name other specific professors or faculties that have contacted the Institute to declare their support, Namaste does not believe they are alone in their position.

> "This is academic research, and this is what they say their research has shown. It has nothing to do with the university's position."
>
> *–Chris Moth,*
> *Concordia Spokesperson*

"Once the document went out, a number of different departments and individual faculty members at Concordia—but also elsewhere—contacted and said, 'This is great, I want to do something like that.' Part of the official launch of the declaration has shown there are lots of faculty that are supporting this."

While Namaste did confirm the Institute's support for the anti-tuition movement, she declined to say what forms that support may take, saying it would depend on the results of the general strike vote on March 7.

"It's a little bit early to say. Once the results of the votes are in, we'll be in a position to deal with specifics. But I think we've been very clear that support can come in many forms," including professors showing leniency to students who miss class, or just wearing one of the red squares that have become a symbol of the campaign against the hikes.

THE HIGH COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Beer may be plentiful, but profits are non-existent at Reggie's. PHOTO PIERRE CHAUVIN

CSU's Business Arm Lost Over $50K Last Semester

• ANDREW BRENNAN

January saw $5,000 more in sales than expected for CUSACorp, but lackluster finances at Reggie's Bar produced another deficit last semester for the corporate arm of the Concordia Student Union, with a loss of $51,439 over four months.

CUSACorp manages Reggie's and rents CSU space to Java U in the Hall Building. Though a for-profit entity, it is historically "not a very profitable organization," according to CSU VP Finance Jordan Lindsay.

CUSACorp, on average, lost over $12,000 per month last semester.

"In the last five years of audited statements, any indication of profit [by CUSACorp] has generally come from Java U's rental income, and Reggie's generally eats up most of it," said Lindsay.

Last semester, Reggie's had $121,833 in sales, but according to Lindsay, that number would need to more than double for CUSACorp to profit.

In March 2010, it was reported by *The Link* that CUSACorp recorded their first profit ever—$66,623 from May 2009 to January 2010. It now appears that this report was overly optimistic, however.

"A very crafty accounting trick [was used] to make that appear as though there was a profit," explained Lindsay. The CSU erased $228,205 in outstanding debt from CUSACorp, enabling the company to post a profit even without resolving the losses at Reggie's.

It's not the first time that CUSACorp's business practices have come under scrutiny in recent years.

Because of the mismanagement of cash sales at Reggie's, with drinks reported missing from inventory or being given out for free, the accounting firm Deloitte called CUSACorp "un-auditable" during the September 2010 CSU audit.

The CSU and its corporate branch are working with Reggie's management to curb inventory losses. Less alcohol is going missing, according to Lindsay, but some drinks are still disappearing on Thursday nights, Reggie's largest weekly event.

A new inventory system will be put in place at the bar this Thursday, adding more accountability for missing items to further cut down on the trend.

Price increases are not being ignored, Lindsay said, but because Reggie's is also considered to be a student space by the CSU, turning a profit must be weighed against accessibility and demand from Concordia students. Things are looking up this semester, however.

> "In the last five years of audited statements, any indication of profit [by CUSACorp] has generally come from Java U's rental income, and Reggie's generally eats up most of it."
>
> *—Jordan Lindsay, CSU VP Finance*

"We've already seen a pretty solid January," said Lindsay. "It's not at the point yet where we'll be saving ourselves," he admitted, but it has translated to almost $5,000 more in sales than expected.

To help maintain momentum, new event nights are starting this month and a lighting system is being added. Lindsay said he hopes to have Queer Concordia back following the success of their last event. In the meantime, B-movie nights and ski/snowboard-themed Fridays are also being planned.

—with files from Adam Kovac

SURVEY SAYS...

CSU to Poll Students on Student Space

• ADAM KOVAC

Student space may be one of the final frontiers for this year's Concordia Student Union executive, who are currently finalizing a survey to find out what exactly Concordia students want.

VP Clubs & Student Space Gonzo Nieto gave an update on a study regarding the subject to Council on Feb. 8.

"We're working with a company called Leger Marketing," Nieto told *The Link*.

"The survey won't be finally formulated until they've looked it over and given feedback and whether anything is leading or needs to be changed. In terms of the actual questions we want to ask, I think we have about 85 per cent of the survey done."

Leger will conduct 2,000 online surveys, as well as 500 face-to-face surveys, for which the CSU will soon be looking to hire three people.

"We're going to be hiring one student space survey coordinator and two surveyors," said Nieto. "Those will be student jobs. The job descriptions are written but they haven't been posted [on the CSU website] yet because our general manager has been out of the office a little bit more this week."

Nieto added that there will be an incentive for students to take part in the online portion of the study, such as entry into a draw for an as-yet unspecified prize.

The survey originated in a Council meeting in late September. At that meeting, Council laid to rest the oft-maligned Faubourg student centre project, which would have seen the CSU and administration splitting the costs and space of the Ste. Catherine St. W. building.

After putting the Faubourg to rest, Council set aside the interest of money derived from funds already raised for a centre to study the future of student space at Concordia. VP Finance Jordan Lindsay estimated that this amount is roughly $160,000, but Nieto said current estimates for the Leger study are only a fraction of the available funds—roughly $14,000, though that number does not take into account certain expenses, such as the planned temporary hirings.

Explaining the five-month gap between the project's inception and the hiring of Leger, Nieto pointed to an extended absence due to extenuating personal circumstances, which resulted in a backlog of work from his clubs portfolio.

Nieto said the study was an effort to improve on a similar one conducted the previous year by former CSU VP External & Projects Adrien Severyns. However, Nieto claimed that the results of that survey were not necessarily helpful, as the questions used were "vague."

"That's the main thing that the committee and I found. The questions were not useful. For starters, you'd find questions like, 'Do you find Concordia student services conveniently located?'

"It doesn't split the results by campus, which would be really useful. But, furthermore, it doesn't even specify which services aren't conveniently located."

Nieto continued, saying the questions currently being considered would be more specific, and rather than using a "strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree" set-up, options would include "relative values" in the answer sheet.

PHOTO ERIN SPARKS

PHOTO JULIA JONES

Presidental Platforms

• HILARY SINCLAIR

What we have here is a failure to communicate—at least that's the theory put forth by both Caroline Bourbonnière and Charlie Brenchley, the two candidates running for president of the Arts and Science Federation of Associations.

Both Bourbonnière and Brenchley highlighted the need to strengthen ASFA's ties between students, member associations and the Concordia Student Union.

"I think [the current executive] could have communicated more effectively with the press and with the CSU," said Bourbonnière. "Certain things wouldn't have happened if they had communicated, like with the Stop Lex Gill Petition."

The petition to impeach CSU President Lex Gill that began circulating late January was co-founded by current ASFA President Alex Gordon.

Brenchley agreed increased communication was necessary for ASFA moving forward, citing specifically a lack of institutional memory.

"I definitely want to promote an ASFA that fosters an open dialogue and open community amongst its students," he said.

"From year to year the transitions can be a little quick and we need to make sure that everything's properly documented," he added. "It boils down to being able to run a more efficient ship."

And ASFA is very big ship.

Representing nearly 18,000 students over 26 member associations, the position of president rightly demands a bit of political experience.

Bourbonnière is currently the Vice President of Communications of the Political Science Students Association and President of Concordia's Volunteers in Action. She says her clean record puts her ahead in the race.

"I'm not too political and I'm really passionate about enhancing the student experience [...] I'm pragmatic and I think that's what ASFA needs to get back on its feet."

Brechley's experience reaches back to high school, through the Dawson College Students Union where he served as VP External Affairs. He currently sits on the ASFA council as the representative for the School of Community and Public Affairs and is the Community Outreach Coordinator of the SCPA student association. He is also a Youth Commissioner with Scouts Canada in Quebec.

"I've gained a wealth of resources that I think are super important especially for the presidential candidate to have when overseeing such a big organization," said Brenchley.

Both candidates said they are committed to the fight against tuition hikes and the battle against the Canadian Federation of Students as they attempt to sue the CSU for $1.8 million. The national student lobby group is suing the CSU over its attempt to withdraw, saying a referendum held in March 2010 in which students voted overwhelmingly to leave, was illegitimate.

"I want to work very closely with student representatives to fight tooth and nail to make sure [the CFS] don't see a dime of our money because it is a ridiculous law suit," said Bourbonnière.

Brenchley agrees that the CFS has no place at Concordia and emphasizes that all ties that he had with the organization have been severed. Brenchley once served as president of the organization's Quebec branch.

Both candidates also stressed the importance of the party-hearty aspect of university political organizations.

"Social events are super important. I've seen it this year and I want to keep building upon that," said Brenchley who cited a desire to extend Frosh as a platform point.

Bourbonnière noted that she wants to combine a little bit of class to her crunking.

"I feel that students also deserve a healthy and fun experience at Concordia and a great academic experience that's why I want to bring in the TED Talk. University is about sharing ideas, it's about being inspired."

For more information on ASFA candidates, visit our website at www.thelinknewspaper.ca/news

STUDENT REPS WALK OUT OF CLOSED SESSION VOTE

• JULIA WOLFE

After being encouraged to bring cameras to the action last week, students hoping for a transparency showdown with Concordia's Board of Governors couldn't tape much action. The Feb. 10 meeting was cancelled when four student representatives left to break quorum.

Moments before a vote to ban a motion to film of the meetings was to take place, the students walked. Without quorum, Concordia's highest governing body was forced to dissolve for the day.

The student representatives—frustrated that the motion was discussed in a closed session before the audience was allowed in—said they felt a walkout was their only option.

Student representative AJ West had previously encouraged all concerned students and members of the media to film the meeting, despite objections from Board members who argue their privacy is at stake.

"I don't feel comfortable passing anything in closed sessions regarding transparency," said graduate student representative Erik Chevrier. "If [the Board is] not willing to discuss it, I'm not going to sit around and have this rubber-stamped."

Chevrier had previously attempted to pass a series of motions regarding transparency, including broadcasting the meeting online. All of his motions were voted down during on Jan. 12 BoG.

But the motion discussed Friday went too far, according to Concordia Student Union President Lex Gill. While Chevrier's original motion proposed an official live stream of the meeting, the discussed motion suggested preventing any audience member from bringing personal recording equipment.

"The open session of Board meetings has historically been recorded," said a visibly shaken Gill, noting that members of the press frequently record the sessions. "That has always been a right.

"Nobody is asking for some sort of radical transparency. No one is asking for that. We're asking that the things the public can ordinarily walk in and see can also be seen by people who are not physically there."

Despite ending the meeting before the public was even allowed in, the representatives felt their point had been made.

"Hopefully a precedent is set today," said undergraduate representative Cameron Monagle. "There will be new BoG members soon and hopefully they will be more open to adopting measures of transparency."

The ability to disrupt quorum was the result of several governors not attending the meeting. When asked what will be done between this meeting and the next one—set to take place on April 19, when such a maneuver may not be possible—Gill replied "I think my next course of action is to develop a proposal and submit it to the Board for consideration regarding a way of actually doing this, given that it's never been submitted to any committee."

"People have been playing ping-pong with Erik Chevrier's motions all year. I think at this point, the way to move forward may be to do the work that a committee would have."

While the student representatives spoke after the meeting about the value of transparency, not all of the Board members shared that attitude about open session.

Community at Large Board Member Joelle Adler spoke with a large group of students as other governors left the boardroom, and maintained that even having an audience for the meetings is not necessarily desirable, citing other corporate boards she has sat on whose meetings are closed to the public.

With files from Adam Kovac

To End the Double Standard

Missing Justice Marches for Change

• COLIN HARRIS

Participants in last year's edition of the March for Missing and Murdered Women, which began after the 1991 murder of a Vancouver woman. PHOTO RODRIGO LOZADA

Valentine's Day may be a time for most to celebrate love between two people, but for those who will be assembling in Cabot Square this Tuesday, it's a time to show love for community.

On that day, advocacy group Missing Justice will be holding a march for missing and murdered women, an annual event started after the murder of a Coast Salish woman in Vancouver in 1991.

Since then, it has been a day of memorial, with a focus on missing and murdered indigenous women.

"While each case of a missing or murdered native woman or girl is completely different, the patterns that have revealed themselves are extremely eerie in their similarity," said Maya Khamala Rolbin-Ghanie, a member of Missing Justice.

"It's almost a formula: police delay the investigation as long as they can, citing all kinds of 'good' reasons to do so."

These reasons include the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, including high drug use and promiscuity among native women.

According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, 583 Native women have disappeared or been murdered since 1980. But it's the systemic forces at play that are at the heart of the issue for those leading the march, and facing them is the only way to make things better.

"Losing one life without response or concrete [police] action, or if we see systemic discrimination, is unacceptable," said Quebec Native Women President Michèle Audette.

Audette is speaking at the march about the need for the Quebec government to take a more active role in educating police and first responders, and holding accountable those who are negligent or discriminatory.

For this year's edition, Missing Justice is bringing in a wider range of speakers, including members from the South Asian Women's Community Centre, Girls Action Foundation and sex worker advocacy group Stella.

"The level of violence against native women is unlike the level of violence against anyone else in the country, but we want to respect the founding principles of this event and commemorate missing and murdered women of all nations," said Rolbin-Ghanie.

In addition to speakers, the march will also include Native women performing, including vocalist Moe Clark and all-female Native drum group Odaya.

Audette has been lobbying for a task force to ensure the police and government are implementing practices to eliminate discrimination, comprised of members of the federal and provincial governments, the Sûreté du Québec, Aboriginal communities and affected families.

She argues the situation needs to improve, and such change will not likely happen without oversight.

"Since last October I've been [telling] the Quebec government that we need a group to improve the situation here, and also that we make sure that we increase awareness with the police," she said.

"There's sometimes discrimination, intolerance or they just don't know about us, how to interact with us.

"We want to target all the areas so that they know where we're coming from and our aspirations for tomorrow."

It's a problem rooted in a lack of understanding, linked to the kind of coverage the issue receives in mainstream media. And that's one area where there is room for great improvement.

"Media coverage can go from anywhere from no coverage at all, to really bad coverage that perpetuates negative stereotypes. The next step up would be to humanize the women, but the coverage that's always missing still is what delves into the systemic issues that cause it," said Rolbin-Ghanie.

"We see lack of education as a huge part of the problem."

HEARD IN THE TOWN HALL

General Strike Options Analyzed at Impromptu Event

• ADAM KOVAC

Concordia's Hall Building lived up to its namesake on Wednesday, as it was host to the first town hall meeting to educate students on the fight against the impending tuition hikes.

"I thought it went really well," said Graduate Students' Association Senator Holly Nazar, who gave a talk about the specific issues that would face students if they engaged in a general strike.

"Hopefully next time there will be more people, because obviously it was short notice," said Nazar, referring to the fact the event was planned on two days notice.

Despite the short notice approximately 70 students watched Nazar's presentation, followed by a question and answer period with Concordia Student Union President Lex Gill and CSU Councillor Irmak Bahar.

Nazar said that, in the case of a strike, it would be "unlikely" for students to lose a full semester that they've paid for. The university, she said, would most likely just extend the semester.

Gill addressed a controversial letter sent out to students last week by Provost David Graham, which said that the administration would not acknowledge or accommodate a strike. Referring to Graham's promise that it would be business as usual, Gill said merely, "It won't."

However, while Nazar offered an alternative scenario where the current semester would be extended in the event of a lengthy strike, that was an option the Concordia administration denied considering.

"Classes will continue, so I don't know [why we would have a] need for an extension to the school year," said university spokesperson Chris Mota. University President Frederick Lowy added, "I don't think it's helpful to comment on things that might happen, but also might not happen."

The Hall meeting was well received by those who attended, though at least one student expressed a desire to see tactics beyond a general strike being considered.

"The strike is an interesting idea, as long as people don't just stay home," said Gabriel Velasco, a student who was in attendance.

"You have to come and actively participate in fighting against the tuition fees," he said, adding that he was also aware of a planned sleep-in in the LB Building for Feb. 27.

However, there were some voices of dissent. Erik Shantz, another student, asked several questions about the feasibility of a tuition freeze, but said afterwards, "I liked it. I was much more informed."

"I'm kind of torn right now. I feel like the government put us in this position by spending frivolously and cutting funding to the schools, then just said, 'To fix the problem, we'll raise tuition,' with nothing to support these facts. I'm not really sure what the best course of action is. I'm not sure what to do, so I'm trying to get more informed.

"I'm in support of the strike, but I'm not sure if I'm going to strike, personally."

Another town hall meeting is planned for Feb. 15 at in the Loyola Chapel in the FC Building. While last week's event was a mixed program for undergrads and graduate students, this one will be divided, with the undergraduates meeting at 2:00 p.m., and the graduates at 4:00 p.m.

> **"I don't think it's helpful to comment on things that might happen, but also might not happen."**
>
> *—Frederick Lowy*
> *Concordia Interim President*

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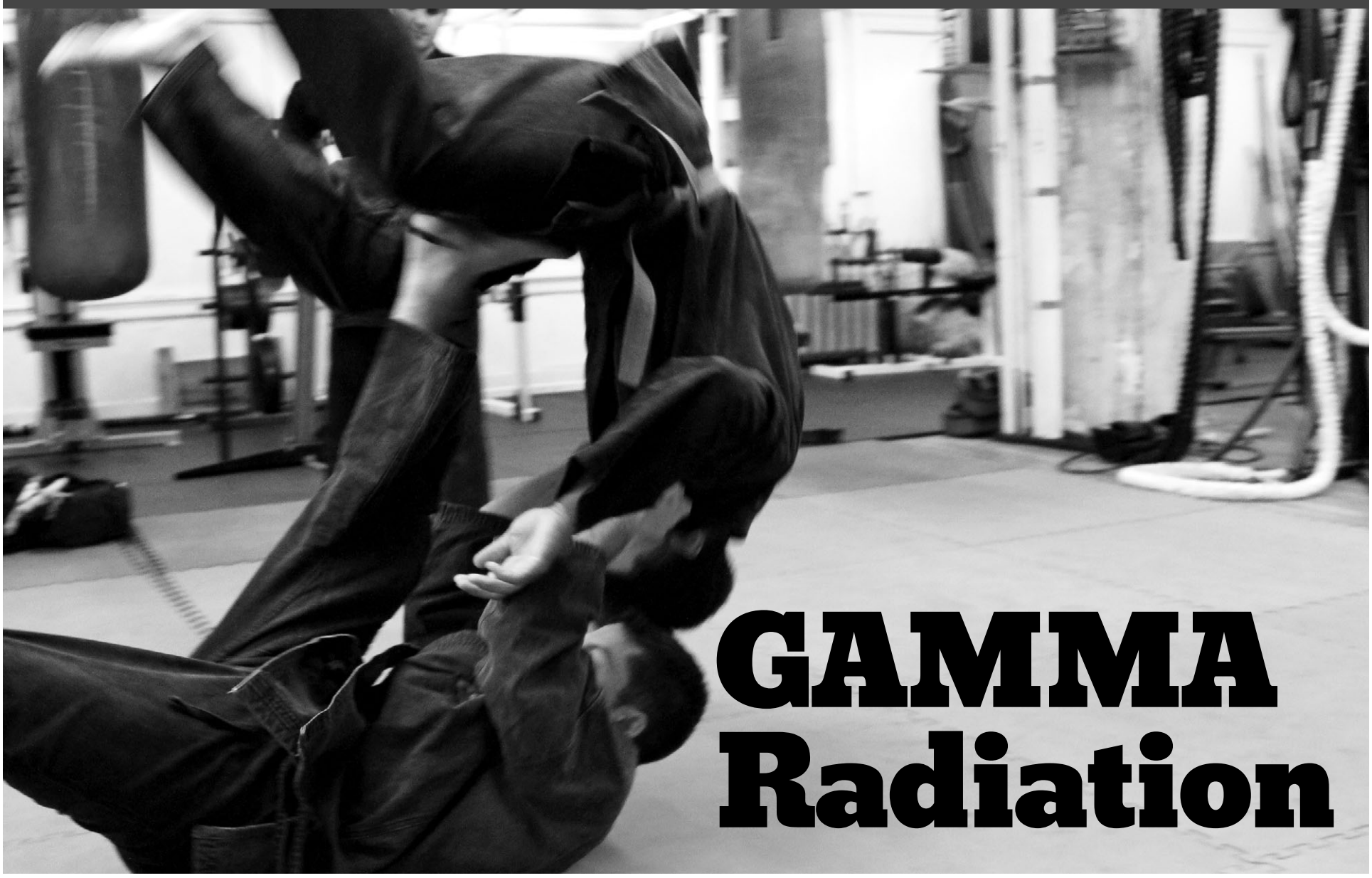


GAMMA Radiation

Two of Philip Gelinas' students tumble on the ground in GAMMA's Kajukenbo class. Legendary mixed martial arts fighter Georges St-Pierre trained at the academy in years past.

PHOTO SAM SLOTNICK

Montreal Mixed Martial Arts Gym Brings in Stars, Students

• STEPHANIE LALEGGIA

Philip Gelinas may be more than twice the age of some of his students, but the 59-year-old mixed martial arts practitioner is gaining respect, and lots of business within the Montreal MMA community.

Gelinas owns and runs Gelinas' Academy of Mixed Martial Arts, located on Mayor St., about halfway between the McGill and Place-des-Arts Metros.

GAMMA'S location is great, but Gelinas' credentials are even better. He has one of the highest ranks in Kajukenbo (a Hawaiian mixture of a number of fighting techniques like Kung Fu, boxing, and Jiu-Jitsu), holding the title of 'Grand Master' by attaining a ninth-degree black belt.

"He prefers being called *Sifu*, a Chinese word that represents teacher, master, and tutor," said Kajukenbo student Robert De Lisi. "He's humble and we greatly respect him."

At the age of 14, Gelinas didn't know why he was so fascinated by martial arts, but it was a passion which has ultimately dictated his life from there on.

He was inspired by his Kajukenbo teacher to travel to the Philippines and, following years of training in the Filipino Martial Arts, he eventually won the Grand Championship at the International Kali Grand Championships at the age of 36.

"I was fighting a younger lightweight winner. I was exhausted and thinking about what table I could just crawl under and die, until halfway through I heard [my opponent's] girlfriend say, 'Come on Kali, you could beat him, he's old,'" said Gelinas.

"If there's anything to spark you to strike, it's the idea of hearing that you can't do it anymore. So I got up, and gave him the beating of his life," laughed Gelinas.

After years of practicing Chinese Kenpo and Kajukenbo, Gelinas felt the obligation to pass on his teachings.

"You kind of have that father's desire to propagate what you're doing. It was just the most natural thing," said Gelinas. "The only way to develop your own training partners is by having a school. So if you don't have a teacher who has a school for all these people to be together, you're going to have to set one up yourself."

And that's exactly what he did. In 1983, Gelinas took a risky leap and rented his first space in Old Montreal.

After years of failing, succeeding and learning from his mistakes, Gelinas hung up the gloves and now teaches a school of eight martial art disciplines, 10 instructors, and too many students to count at the new downtown location.

Teaching the art was probably for the best, as some of his past students have now become success stories and are glamorized on GAMMA's wall of fame—one of them being current Ultimate Fighting Championship welterweight champion Georges St-Pierre.

St-Pierre came to GAMMA because of instructor Fabio Holanda, a Brazilian Top Team black belt and the head of BTT Canada in Montreal, which operates out of GAMMA's gym.

GAMMA has now become one of the top Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu programs in the country, and was part of St-Pierre's team during his 2008 UFC wins against Matt Hughes and Matt Serra.

"When [St-Pierre] was here, there was an awful lot of curiosity. People would come in just to see if he was here," said Gelinas. "There were a lot of people who would travel across the world, popping in in Montreal to come train with us because we had certain people that were really interesting."

Though not every student who walks into GAMMA comes out a UFC contender, Gelinas is grateful for those who work hard and care for their own mental and physical well-being; he would rather have an apprentice who cares and tries than someone who succeeds without putting in serious effort.

The MMA club does not promote students to a higher belt as easily as other martial arts institutions. Gelinas tries to push his students to their full potential, ensuring they will be prepared for anything they might face in competitions—or on the streets.

"There are a lot of people who could pretend to do everything. Bravery is easy to fake," said Gelinas. "As long as you know that the person is not going to attack you back, you could be as brave as you want."

"Halfway through I heard my opponent's girlfriend say, 'Come on Kali, you could beat him, he's old.' If there's anything to spark you to strike, it's the idea of hearing that you can't do it anymore. So I got up, and gave him the beating of his life."

—Philip Gelinas, founder of GAMMA

BEST OF THE WEB

DAILY COVERAGE AT THELINKNEWSPAPER.CA

MEN'S BASKETBALL

CONCORDIA 75 BISHOP'S 78

It took three quarters for Concordia's men's basketball team to realize they were playing a basketball game. The last-place Bishop's University Gaiters shocked the first-place Stingers, but Concordia will look to avenge this loss on Friday when they take on the Gaiters in Lennoxville before coming home to take on McGill for a Saturday matinee. The games are set to begin at 8:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. respectively.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

CONCORDIA 71 BISHOP'S 40

Concordia's women's basketball team obliterated the Bishop's University Gaiters 71-40 to put and end to their five-game losing streak. The Stingers will be looking to solidify their hold on second place in the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec standings when they pay the Gaiters a visit Friday night before coming home Saturday night to face the high-flying McGill Martlets. Both games start at 6:00 p.m.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

CONCORDIA 0 CARLETON 3
CONCORDIA 1 MONTREAL 2

It was another disappointing weekend for Concordia's women's hockey team as the Stingers failed to register a goal Sunday afternoon against the Carleton University Ravens after falling to the Université de Montréal Carabins Friday afternoon. The Stingers will close out their regular season this week with games Friday night against the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees at home and Sunday afternoon on the road against the McGill Martlets. The puck will drop at 7:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. respectively.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Stingers player Enos Osei tries to side-step a U21 Montreal Impact Academy player on Sunday afternoon at Loyola's Stinger Dome. PHOTO DAVID MURPHY

Stingers Slink Into Offseason

Disappointing Season Ends in Blowout Loss to Carleton

• ANDREW MAGGIO

Yet another disappointing performance in a must-win game left the Concordia men's hockey team in a state of shock Saturday afternoon, as they were officially eliminated from playoff contention.

The Stingers lost their third straight contest, falling prey to the Carleton University Ravens in a 7-0 blowout. The loss was the team's second blanking in as many games, having lost 5-0 to the McGill Redmen three days earlier.

With the loss, the Stingers failed to qualify for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Ontario University Athletics division of Canadian Interuniversity Sport. Concordia and Queen's University have identical records, but the Queen's Gaels owned the tiebreaker that allowed them to finish ahead of the Stingers—head-to-head goal differential.

In the two games between the teams, Queen's edged the Stingers by a mere two goals. Though Concordia won the first contest 6-1, Queen's took the second one handily 9-2, however, giving them a 10-8 advantage.

The Stingers let their defensive responsibilities go against Carleton, too. The Ravens got out to a quick 3-0 start in the first period and added four more in the third, driving a stake in the heart of the Stingers' postseason aspirations.

Jeff Hayes and Joey Manley paced the Ravens' offense with a goal and three assists apiece, and the Ravens outshot the Stingers 30-25, with half of their shots coming in the opening frame.

ConU's starting goaltender, Nick Champion, allowed five goals on 25 shots before being replaced by Loic Boivin early in the third period. Boivin allowed three goals on the five shots that he faced.

"We came out and got down early in the game," said Stingers head coach Kevin Figsby. "It was a bit of a carnival-like atmosphere in there; the crowd was very much on their side. We took an early penalty and they scored, then four minutes later they scored again.

"We outplayed them in the second but it didn't matter what we did," he said. "The kids played hard and with a lot of class, we just couldn't buy a goal."

The loss capped off a disappointing final stretch in which the team managed to score only three goals in their last three games while conceding 17 as they lost six of the final 10 games of the regular season.

The Stingers now retreat into the offseason, having been so close to wrapping up a playoff berth, only to let it slip away.

For Figsby, however, this season was a sign of great things to come.

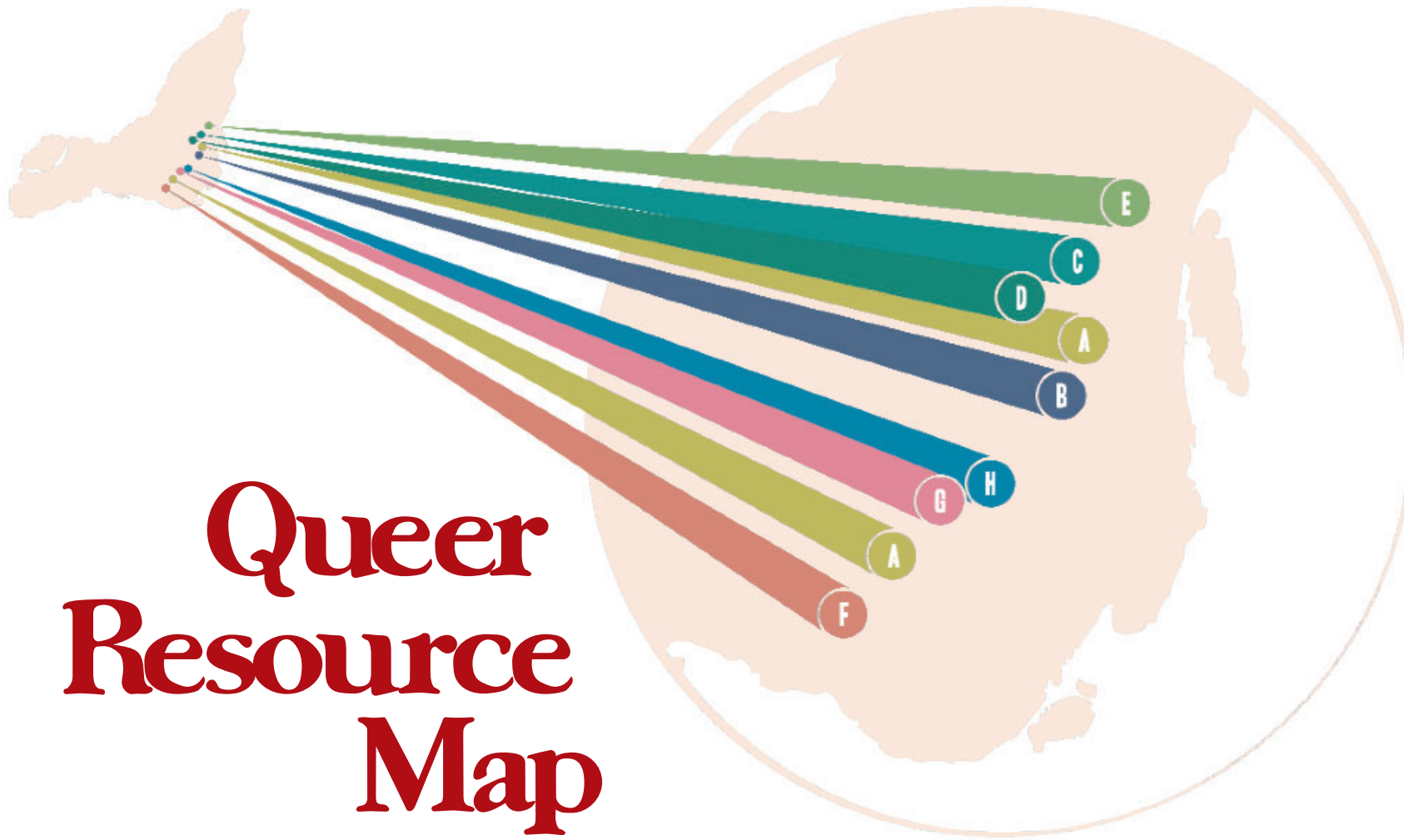
"I'm not disappointed with the season. We beat the number-one ranked team in the country twice this year," said Figsby, referring to the Stingers' performances against McGill, "And everyone was feeling really good about themselves.

"A lack of experience hurt us down the stretch, but the way we played this season gives a tremendous amount to be positive about moving forward."

The Stingers will be returning next semester without too many changes to their roster as only three players, including captain Eric Begin, will be graduating.

(Queer)

Queer Resource Map



GRAPHIC JULIA WOLFE

A

Concordia Counselling & Development
Loyola Campus, AD-103
Tel: 514-848-2424 ex. 5555
SGW Campus, H-440
Tel: 514-848-2424 ex. 3545
Queer Concordia
2020 Mackay St., Rm. P106

B

2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy
Support group with a focus on harm reduction, empowerment and self-determination.
2110 Mackay St.
Tel: 514-848-2424 ex. 7431

C

Centre de solidarité lesbienne
Lesbian Social and support organization that aims to provide community and friendship.
4126 St. Denis. St., Ste. 301
Tel: 514-526-2452

D

Queerline
English-language support and referral line run by Queer McGill
3480 McTavish St.
Hours: Mon. to Sat.: 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Sept. to April
Tel: 514-398-6822

E

The Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Montreal
Resources and LGBTQQIA social groups. The Open Book Library, a documentation centre on homosexuality in Canada.
2075 Plessis St., Rm. 110
ccglm.org

F

Gay Chamber of Commerce of Quebec
1307 Ste-Catherine Est., Rm 100
Tel: 514-522-1885

G

Head & Hands
Provides preventative and non-judgmental help to youth.
5833 Sherbrooke St. W.
Tel: 514-481-0277
Hours: Mon. to Thurs.: 10:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Fri.: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

H

Project 10
Community organization that of support to LGBTQQIA youth between the age of 14 to 25.
2075 Plessis St., #307
Tel: 514-989-4585
questions@p10.qc.ca

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COVER ART BY ELISE DAWSON

What's to Come

You might have been shocked by our cover.

You might have also asked yourself, is this how *The Link* actually sees queer identity?

Well, no, but to break away from the tired Valentine's Day formula this year, we decided to throw some kink your way.

In keeping with the season, we stripped down to the basics of exploring queerness, identity and politics—while also enjoying the politics of pleasure.

While we recognize that kink is only one facet of queer identity that not everyone embraces, it's still important to explore this aspect of a vast and varied community, and shine a light on the issues so often left unspoken or shrouded in taboo.

This isn't about being provocative for the sake of being provocative. This is about embracing desire, being honest about our carnal kinks and letting the freak flags fly.

When *The Link*'s first Gay Issue was published 30 years ago, it was provocative. It moved people. It wasn't common for a non-gay publication to embrace gay issues in a positive way. And as a result of our thinking outside the hetero cisgendered box, people negatively reacted to the issue by dumping piles of the paper in stairwells—some went so far as to send rape threats to the issue's coordinator.

Today, we live in a different world.

Not only have the attitudes towards LGBTQ people changed dramatically, but it's no longer acceptable behaviour—at least in the college-going bubble we live in—to proudly discriminate.

This is not to say that there isn't work to be done and progress to be made, of course. Trans and gender-queer people still face significant amounts of daily harassment and intolerance not only from other individuals, but from the institutions that are supposed to protect them.

This judgment of so-called difference also applies to those you choose to fuck.

In highlighting our kinks, subverting the taboos and celebrating a plurality of sexual desires, we attempt—in the same pioneering spirit of coordinators before us—to push boundaries and break stereotypes.

We hope this special issue encourages you to embrace your inner kink—or at least better understand those that do.

Cheers, queers!

—Laura Beeston, Editor-in-Chief
& Julian Ward, News Editor
Issue Coordinators

KINK WITH THE LINK

KARAOKE EDITION

DRINK WITH THE LINK
with a little more kink

- **Thurs Feb. 16**
- **Club Date: 1218 rue Sainte-Catherine**
  Beaudry Metro
- **10 p.m. - 3 a.m.**

Rub-a-Dub-Dub We Studs in a Tub

Bathhouses Still Steamy in 2012

BY JULIAN WARD

Tall, athletic, handsome, an easy fit for the 'jock' label when it comes to gay subcategories, 21-year-old Concordia student "Connor" visits Sauna Oasis in the gay village every couple of weeks with his boyfriend, also a university student.

"It all starts with eye contact," he said of getting laid at the baths. "If I'm interested, I'll look back twice to get his attention. Just looking at each other says a lot.

"If there's a connection, you approach the person and start touching each other. Then one of us will invite the other person to their room, and it happens."

It's simple, raw—and hot.

Although Connor's been cruising Montreal hotspots since the age of 16, he waited until last year to hit the baths for the first time.

"It's that unknown thing, so I wanted to go experience it and see what it's like," he said.

Gay saunas are often thought to harbor clients as old as the institutions themselves—gargoyles of a time long past. But what waits on the other side of the bathhouse doors is surprisingly different than one might expect.

At the same time a gang-bang rages on a few metres away, an older man enjoys an innocent conversation with a stranger over a game of pool. Diversity is everywhere to be found.

For Connor, the guys are a secondary attraction. That may seem odd, but what really stokes his fire is the act of being there in itself—a thrill that the online environment simply cannot provide.

"You're completely naked in a towel, not hiding behind anything. People are attracted to you for being in your own skin," he explained. "It's flattering, obviously."

This may be, but one has to wonder whether the experience comes at a higher cost than the price of admission. After all, it's only logical that a den of casual sex would be rampant with disease—a veritable affront to the fight against STIs and HIV. The truth, however, isn't so cut and dry.

"The biggest problem we're fighting right now from a public health perspective is barebacking (sex without a condom), which is making a huge comeback," said Yale MD student Sakil Chundydyal.

From 2009 to 2010, Chundydyal was an outreach worker in Montreal bathhouses for REZO, a community-based organization that focuses on the health of gay and bisexual men. He provided counseling to bathhouse clients after they were tested for HIV and STIs.

According to Chundydyal, the spread of STIs in bathhouses does not call for special concern, since safe oral sex is rarely practiced in our culture. As such, related infections are spread regardless of whether people are going to bathhouses or not.

Chundydyal said a combination of complete anonymity and a burgeoning "barebacking community," comprised of 15- to 30-year-olds, has made bathhouses a playground ripe for the spread of HIV infection.

Without the visceral connection to the deadly reality of the '80s and '90s, and the awareness culture that sprang up as a result, members of this group may not fully understand the potential ramifications of unsafe sexual practices.

This sensation of perceived invincibility, combined with a highly charged erotic environment, is alluring to many. But there are more reasons why people reject the plethora of digital hook-up options in favour of the steamy sauna.

"Online culture is sort of hyper-sexualized. I find it to be very judgmental and superficial," said Chundydyal.

Connor agrees. He says that online, people are all about playing games and lying in order to entertain themselves and get what they want. In the sauna, however, things are very different.

"You're more real, you're being yourself, and you can't play games," said Chundydyal.

He added that "your barriers for what's acceptable" change once everyone is out of their fashionable clothing and wearing identical white towels.

Chundydyal remembers a good example of this, when an older bathhouse client once told him, "The very same 21-year-old who [snubs] you at Sky Bar will be sucking your cock at G. I. Joe after the bars close."

This inclusive environment also makes saunas a safe haven for those who otherwise aren't accepted in society. New immigrants, for example, who have a difficult time in bars and clubs due to a language barrier, can thrive in the sauna, where little verbal communication is needed.

"If not for the bathhouse, a lot of those people would not have any place to socialize. And in that way, I think [bathhouses still have] a role [today]," said Chundydyal.

And in a world where new technologies are constantly changing fundamental aspects of our daily lives, it is worth remembering that in some cases, the practices of an earlier time offer something that modern innovation does not.

WHAT'S IN

Fear of Flying

Flight-Ban Discriminates Against Trans Fliers

• OLIVER LEON

A regulatory change quietly made to the Aeronautics Act by Transport Canada last July could disallow transsexual and transgender people from boarding flights leaving Canada.

The change caused a stir last month after transgender activist Christin Milloy blogged about the discovery.

Section 5.2(1)(c) of the ID screening regulations now says, "An air carrier shall not transport a passenger if the passenger does not appear to be of the gender indicated on the identification he or she presents."

The names on all pieces of identification must also be matching—a problem for people who are in the midst of transitioning. If there are major discrepancies with your identification cards, you will not be getting on that flight.

"The only impact it will have is to put into regulation discriminatory practice.

"It will make trans people miserable, it will make gender nonconforming people miserable, it will make boarding agents miserable and it will make cisgender [non-trans] people—mostly women—who could be perceived as the 'other gender' miserable," said Gabrielle Bouchard, a Trans Health Network and peer support coordinator at the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy.

She added that she is working closely with the New Democratic Party and other groups to fight this ban.

The Canadian queer newspaper *Xtra* reported that NDP Minister of Parliament Olivia Chow noticed Conservatives snickering when pressed for answers by members of the NDP and by Liberal MP Justin Trudeau about the new regulations during the question period on Feb. 1.

At the time, she argued the section of the rule was "unnecessary, it's backwards and it's discriminatory," before putting a motion before the Chair to repeal the identity screening regulation.

"The Conservatives just voted against my motion to stop discrimination against the travelling transgendered community," Chow tweeted on Feb. 9. "Shame."

According to *Xtra*, Transport Canada has stated, "Any passenger whose physical appearance does not correspond to their identification can continue to board an airplane by supplying a letter from a healthcare professional explaining the discrepancy.

"We have no records of any individual being denied boarding in Canada because they are transgender or transsexual."

It is possible to fly if you have proof that you have had sex reassignment surgery or a letter explaining that you will have the surgery within a year.

This is problematic for trans people who do not want to undergo, or are unable to afford, the expense of surgery. Some provinces will also only pay for SRS if you go to specific clinics in Ontario or Quebec, which would be difficult for trans people to get to, given the current flying regulations.

A Facebook group, À bas l'interdiction aérienne transphobe—Against Canada's trans flight ban, has formed to provide updates on the situation.

Currently, transgender and transexual people do not have federal protection under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Bill C-389, a bill that would have amended the Act to add gender identity and gender expression was passed in Parliament and the House of Commons, however it died in the Senate when the federal election was called in 2011.

Details on how to apply for a "Sex-Unspecified" passport in protest can be found at chrismilloy.ca.

A NAME?

How Policy Denies Identity

• BEN BOUDREAU

Empowerment comes from the strangest places sometimes. Nothing makes me feel more empowered than watching society's intellectual elite get weak at the knees when they realize that I'm a transexual. All of a sudden, my features shift from handsome ruggedness and good-boy looks into the alien look of a strange transexual child.

People can be shallow, regardless of class, but I thought for a long time that it would be different in university, that these so-called "intellects" would understand. After all, they're the ones with the books and brains. But I guess I was wrong.

Some of my least favourite experiences at Concordia have been having to listen to students/professors/administrators moan about how they "just don't understand" the variety of gender, which they call "weird."

Their unfortunate state of confusion perpetually saddens me. I'm left with a sense of sympathy because they will not allow themselves to come to recognize that, beyond our genitals and our features, we are all the same on the inside.

I've been a transexual ever since my father's sperm fertilized my mother's egg. In my late teens I was lucky enough to find a word in the English language to shape the understanding of my innate being.

It was shortly after that I jumped into the abyss of life transition to put my spirit at ease and now—thanks to science and my awesome therapist—I'm everything that I see in my dreams, and more.

An interesting fact: trans and gender-variant people have existed since humans had a language to document our presence on this miniscule chunk of stardust we call Earth. Despite this, the judicial courts and academic institutions have pretended that trans and gender variant people are the result of broken homes and rock 'n' roll.

Another interesting fact: trans and gender nonconforming people are born just as organically as cisgender people. We are who we are, just like you are who you are, and if you still can't understand that after thousands of dollars of higher learning, you should consider asking for a refund.

This is my story of the oppression I've faced—and continue to face—at Concordia University because I want a higher education.

My educational institution allows administrators, professors and colleagues to refer to me by my designated sex at birth (which is female), and call me by my unfortunately-feminine birth name (which is also female), even though I've requested many times that I would most definitely prefer the name Ben alongside the usage of male pronouns.

The school demands an official government document that states my gender if I want to be referred to as Mr. Ben Boudreau at school.

In order to get that government document, you have to have two surgeries—one to remove my reproductive organs—and then I need to undertake hormonal replacement therapy until I'm well past 50 if I want to stay alive and healthy.

How, though, does having an internal organ one moment and not having one in the next make me any more of a man than I am now?

Maybe I was concerned about the two bags of flesh hanging from my chest a couple years ago (thankfully, they were removed), but why would I care about an organ I can't even see?

Hey, I don't have the problem here. If my body makes you that uncomfortable, maybe you're the one with the "mental disease."

The most frustrating thing for me currently is the name change. I started the process over a year ago and I'm still waiting for the finalization. It's entertaining that I needed a psych evaluation from my therapist saying I suffer from a mental disease in order to change my name—and she apologized when handing the papers over to me.

By consistently overlooking my requests, every day that I walk through the Hall Building, Concordia's administration announces to the school body that they can ignore my "imagined" persona and not refer to me as Ben.

They argue that if the government has not officially recognized my desired gender or name and won't recognize me as male, then why should they? This causes me fear that someone will bash my head into a wall because the perpetrator was taught that they don't *have* to respect me by my academic institution and my judicial courts.

I also can't help but think that maybe one day I'm going to use the bathroom and get raped out of hatred because my professor outed me in front of 150 fellow students.

These situations sound extreme, but these are realities that trans and gender variant people face everyday. I don't have to tell you what the majority of people in the world might think of trans people; you can probably construct your own ideas about that without my help.

These are reasons enough for the trans/gender-variant community to not want to access higher learning, because it is far from welcoming, and definitely not safe.

Concordia University should be aware of the message they're sending to trans/gender non-conforming persons by not recognizing their actual gender and name preference, which violates trans/gender variant persons' rights of disclosure and privacy.

This adds to the mental strain of the already complex navigation to trans/gender-variant lives. Why do they go out of their way to make it harder for the already challenging life of a trans/gender-variant person?

What I find the most frightening about all of this is that, thanks to backwards policies like these, my school is suggesting to its students—the elite of tomorrow—to think it's okay to exercise hatred and turn a blind eye towards discrimination.

That doesn't give my community, my family or myself much of a future, does it?

Think about it—and, most importantly—talk about it. We queers and our allies have to be the change they want to see, because no one is going to hand us our rights unless we make ourselves seen and our voices heard.

If Concordia hasn't made any changes by the end of this year on this subject, the first thing I'm going to do next fall is campaign to have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights decal removed from the Hall Building windows.

We might as well call a spade a spade. Until Concordia recognizes and embraces trans and gender-variant people at their school, it's hypocritical to have those hallowed words on display.

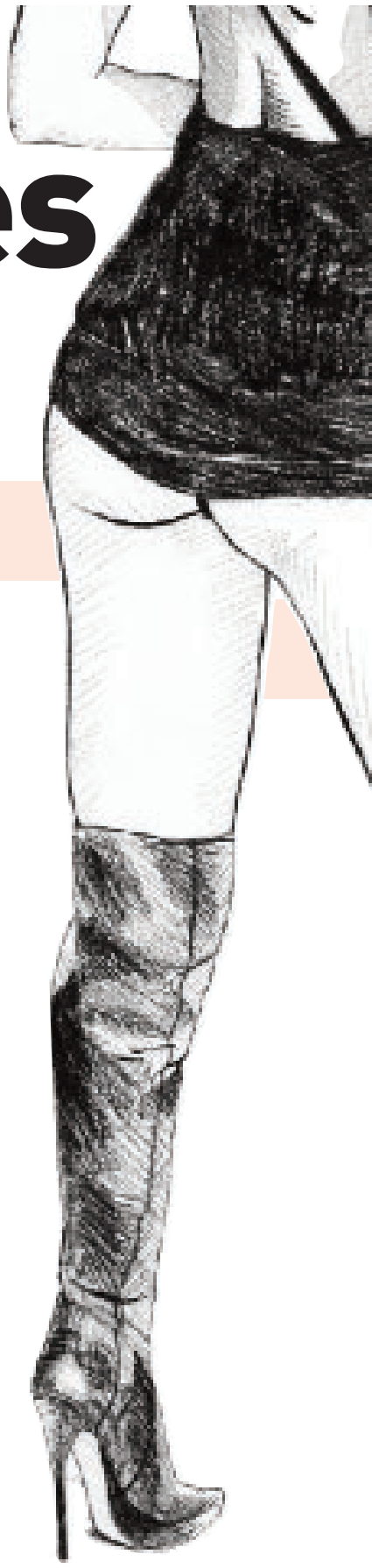
If you'd like to share your thoughts on this, email me at trans.action.cu@gmail.com. If you're curious about trans issues, you should stop by the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy (2110 Mackay St.) and take out a book from their library.

And if you'd just like to complain to the administration, send Concordia Interim President Frederick Lowy an email at president@concordia.ca and tell him what you think.

"We are who we are, just like you are who you are, and if you still can't understand that after thousands of dollars of higher learning, you should consider asking for a refund."

Perverse Pleasures

BY LAURA BEESTON



GRAPHIC JEFF BUSH

Queer Sex, Kink & Love

"We are all a little weird and life's a little weird, and when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall in mutual weirdness and call it love."

— Dr. Seuss

Fetish, kink, freak—whatever you call it, and whatever you feel about it—is actually everywhere.

Permeating our physical bodies, punctuating our pleasures and playing a real part in the power dynamics all around us, kinkiness remains as primal and passionate as we allow it to be—despite science, institutional and social expectations' attempts to demoralize and shame it out of us.

Of course, historically, certain barriers have been drawn, setting up the notion that "normal" or "natural" sex and love practices exist—as opposed to so-called "perversity" or "deviance." But it's obviously not a simple binary.

More than ever before, contemporary sex is about pleasure and recreation rather than reproduction or religion.

The heightened awareness of the transexual and transgender experience also seems to be ushering in a new queer moment where desire and identity dance together.

And there is more information and access than ever.

As the concepts of what is marginal and what is baseline continually evolve, there seems to be an acute awareness these days that what gets us off is as variant and vibrant as the individual. That said, we're not as open as we could be; some of the people featured for this piece asked their names be withheld because of the sensitive and sexual nature of the article.

With the spirit of sexy exploration at the heart of our kinky questions, the following interviews were conducted with an intention to explore the people behind the perverse.

Walking the Kinky Line

"Switch" is a 20-something Shibari Japanese rope bondage enthusiast. The fetishism, coupled with the aesthetic and technical elements of restraint, are a real turn-on for her.

"I can't help but address, first of all, that it's not perverse to me. I think it's a natural and intuitive extension of my pleasure," she said. "There's a reason why bondage is called bondage- *play*, or rope-*play* or fetish-*play*. That's the word we use because that's exactly what you're doing.

"The bedroom is the last place that we have left to be truly playful. There are pretty strict confines for behaviour in everyday society everywhere else."

Part of the appeal, Switch admitted, is that there is something inherently sexy about being a so-called deviant.

"That's why kinks are kinks," she said. "Some people have their extreme sports... you need cathartic release somewhere."

Paradoxically, Switch said that being tied up is where she feels the most free.

"A lot of people into BDSM say the same thing, whether it's pain or restraint, they feel liberated by it," she said. "It's a healthy outlet for our urges."

Pushing her own limits into the world of love and bondage for the first time just over a year ago, Switch became fascinated by the practice and "crossing an invisible boundary that I realized wasn't even a boundary to begin with." But even identifying and sharing her kink has opened her up to the expectations of others.

"You start being asked, 'Would you do this, or that?' But that's not how it works in my mind. I don't set up the limits ahead of time anymore. I go where the pleasure is. It's really about the intimate instincts."

Thirty years ago, people feeling isolated or abnormal about these kinds of instincts would seek medical help far more often than they do today, according to Dr. Laurie Betito, a sex therapist with nearly three decades of experience who hosts a talk radio segment called *Passion* on CJAD 800.

She rarely sees regular kinksters anymore, but Betito said it's because they've found each other.

"The Internet has changed everything, especially access," Betito said. "Literally, if you think something you like is a little weird, you Google it and a thousand sites come up where the fetish is the thing. You find your community online, you blog, talk and chat, and suddenly it takes away the stigma."

In all her experience, the only thing she said psychologists know for sure is that the kinky parts of human sexuality are truly variant and diverse.

"There's no understanding why one person finds one thing attractive and arousing and another person might find it disgusting," she said. "Try to explain coprophilia to someone, you know? How could shit be arousing? Yet, it is. And there is a bunch of people out there who get off on it."

Betito said she has seen it all, from bondage and discipline to sadism and masochism, to erotic fantasy, role-playing, polyamoury, nudists, dollification, porn and every fetish you could possibly imagine.

If she had to guess why some fetish has evolved over the years to become mainstream fixtures on MTV while others remain marginal, she'd say communication and exposure—along with our sex-saturated culture and its messages—have something huge to do with the changing attitudes.

There were no hairless porn pussies thirty years ago, she tells me; today, Betito treats men who can't imagine having sex with a partner who has a bush.

It's just one example of how our contact with the carnal defines our culture, she said. "It's actually changed everything."

The Mainstream and the Unseen

Montreal *Mirror* 2011 Noisemaker Esther Splett is an independent filmmaker—when she's not working a 9-to-5 job penning screenplays for a mainstream adult content provider.

The young porn writer, who produced the occultist sexploitation short *Girls of Prey* in 2010, sees a lot of overlap between what she does artistically and for a paycheck. Her films aim to satirize sexual subcultures and walk the line between fetish and excess, arousal and disgust.

"I'm not sure if I have a normal sense, sometimes, about what is accepted or not," Splett admitted. Sex, for her, is an extreme attempt at communication.

While she's told her family about her job at the porn plant, Splett said she feels her smutty side has been accepted—as long as she doesn't begin performing.

"Performing your sexuality for a group of people or a social scene can consume it," she said, "And anything personal about sex can be erased. That obviously happens in porn a lot, even though I try to address that, but it's hard because I'm often working within a really rigid mainstream framework."

Splett explained her work is seen as "cute" to people—as long as she only admits to the writing part of it. "But if I star in it, all of a sudden it's not so cute," she explained. "It's like I should be embarrassed to tell people I'm a porn star, but it's edgy to say I'm a porn writer. That's a really big morality line that can be problematic."

Being sexy "in the wrong ways" is something she said she

explores in film, however. Investigating the tensions between what's hot and what is too much defines Splett's work as a feminist queer producer. She finds creativity in the confusion.

"Queer porn and sexuality can be similar to the mainstream in the sense that people will play with these archetypal roles, but we are very aware of the implications of those roles," Splett explained.

"Queer desire specifically seems to be coming from an acceptance of all different kinds of sexual behaviour, and seeing it as valid, whereas in mainstream porn these roles are presented as reality, as the natural order of things, even though they can be damaging."

Creating content and new representations, as well as adding more plurality to porn culture, is the way she personally works towards advancing sexual freedoms. Another difference she's noticed is a gradual, queer shift away from "the mainstream big cock and implant-ed tit obsession" to pleasures not necessarily being defined by the genitals.

"It's getting easier to do, you can see how many different voices and bodies there are out there now," she said. Slowly but surely, Splett predicts the porn industry, as huge and variant as the kinks and communities it serves, is catching up.

Making Connections

Contessa Alura works as a pro-domme, performer and educator, and is the founder and director of Montreal's Alternative Lifestyles Community Centre, which opened its doors two years ago.

The only community centre of its kind in town, the centre strives to promote awareness of alternative relationships and lifestyles, as well as to help clarify many of the misconceptions about things like BDSM to enlighten people to the enjoyment and pleasure that can come from it.

Skillshares, group discussion and social events are regular features of the ALCC, and Alura believes the most rewarding part of the collaboration is listening to peers say the sense of community has changed or saved their lives.

While Alura believes we are very fortunate to live in Montreal—where many sexual freedoms are accepted, and where alternative communities can thrive—education is still her priority.

"What's still keeping us back from full acceptance is a lack of understanding and awareness of alternatives," she said. "[Beyond] BDSM, more freedoms in relationships and partnerships, more openness about exploring, and less jealousy and personal insecurities would be possible if we can talk about it. Education is key."

With this emphasis, as well as the creation of safe, supportive and welcoming spaces for like-minded individuals and marginalized communities, the ALCC has a huge mandate that is one of a kind for exploring kinks.

Queerness—as an orientation, lifestyle and identity—fits into the equation, along with the rest of the community who do not wish to be boxed into society's terms of what is right or wrong, normal or abnormal, male or female, said Alura.

"There is a freedom of individuality here," she explained. "And a shared open-mindedness that all people can have the right to do and be what they want and what they are without discrimination—that is what we all have in common."

The intense connections between people are what fuel this passion.

"For me and my clients, [BDSM] allows us a whole spectrum of discovery emotionally, physically and psychologically that you wouldn't experience otherwise," said Alura. The power exchange of BDSM is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the play, she added.

"Fear doesn't create relationships," she explained. "It is all based on consent, and the fun of these power exchange games. It doesn't work unless both partners are really into it. If you can let go with someone and build that trust on a deeper level, it can be really enjoyable."

Fucking Normal

For Alura, deriving real pleasure from pain, or any other practice, can be as soft or light or hard as the individual likes, and can often cover an entire spectrum of trust and comfort.

"I want to point out that it is about as varied and diverse as the people who do it," she insisted. One thing in particular that she's learned from her work as a pro-domme and through the ALCC is how much a community can grow from talking about the things that we hide.

Communication, she argued, undermines some of the mistaken beliefs about alternative lifestyles that keep individuals feeling shamed or alienated.

"The biggest misconception is that people who engage in [kink] are out to lunch, but [...] I've seen fetishes in everybody," agreed Dr. Betito. "I cannot tell you there is one profile of a fetishist. There is not one kind.

"I ran into a guy in a dungeon once, all in his getup and leathers, who was telling me he's a submissive and into all this stuff, and at the time I thought he looked familiar. As it turns out, the guy was my kid's teacher. You just never know."

Both women maintained that getting to the point of accepting differences and being open about desire would help pave the way for a more tolerant and open society—and that education and communication is key for this to happen.

"I feel, completely, that there are no limits except for our own guilt and fear," said Switch.

"Maybe that's what it comes down to sometimes. We still have a lot of cultural influences that stigmatize this stuff, but I think it's more about what happens between individuals now. It's really out there for you to find. It's as easy as streaming any old movie trailer."

For more information about the Alternative Lifestyles Community Centre, check out alccva.wordpress.com. Dr. Laurie can be found at drlaurie.com and her talk show *Passion* airs at 10:00 p.m. on CJAD 800 AM. Esther Splett's art can be found at hourofthestar.tumblr.com, and her band, Sacral Nerve, is playing a show Feb. 24 at Bistro de Paris (4536 St. Denis St.)

KINKY COVER ART

• COLIN HARRIS

For Elise Dawson, flipping through a skin-mag with her mom over her shoulder was the start of a very comfortable sexual lifestyle, which has now transitioned to producing porn.

"I have enjoyed porn since flipping through my first *Penthouse* magazine with my mom at age 11," said Dawson, who designed the cover for *The Link's* Queer Issue. "I had discovered it hidden in my father's golf magazines and I was fascinated with this lesbian hiking feature.

"My mom found me looking at it and we looked at it together. She was very careful to explain that it wasn't a shameful thing, it was just something people liked to look at, no big deal," she said.

Dawson is in her fourth year at the University of Manitoba School of Art, dividing her life between art school, her job as a "bitchy barista," contributing to local art magazine *Chesterfield*, volunteering at a feminist art mentoring program and still making time for her boyfriend Taylor and their girlfriend, Ayla.

But her focus in the last year has been exploring masculinity in film. She aims to create positive role models for feminist men, and in doing so has produced works that toe the line between art and pornography.

"There's no such thing as art porn," said Dawson. "Pornography is defined as the portrayal of sex without 'artistic merit' but I have always been interested in pushing boundaries, upsetting the standard."

With many of the paintings in the Western canon studied by young art students originally created to titilate, the line between art and porn is all the more constructed and convoluted. So Dawson unpacks these constructs, empowering all bodies involved.

Her film *CONFETTI*, co-created with Lasha Mowchun and Emily Sirota, aims to break down the stereotypes seen repeatedly in conventional porn. Lasha takes on a bio-drag (a women who dresses up as a drag queer) persona while Emily adopts her own drag king character, and the "fuck-sequence" that ensues is followed by a costume-free, strobe-light scene which Dawson describes as "romance."

It ends with Emily and Lasha changing costumes, to drive home the point of how constructed their sexuality is. The film remains a performance, only seen on small screenings and projected onto Lasha's naked back, according to Dawson.

"Queer art should bring attention to itself," said Dawson. But, she points out, "I don't have a good argument for why my art is queer. I fuck girls and boys confidently, so I guess that makes me queer. My gender feels more fluid—my sex is female but I have always felt very, so-called, male-minded, Scorpio-sex driven. I take charge, I'm the leader people look to.

"Lately I am femme but before I was soft butch. Ha, it's a construction. I'm only femme lately because I realized some fashionistas are feminist and I want to emulate them," she said.

"I have always felt an intense confidence in my sexuality and I wish everybody would feel that way."

Rapping for the Queer Collective

Rough Diamond Embraces Queer Hip-Hop

• ALEX MCGILL

Hip-hop is not entirely accustomed to seeing Queer artists amongst its ranks—or so you might think.

Having a strong, Queer hip-hop community in Montreal may be surprising, but Queer artists have actually been incredibly present in the Montreal hip-hop scene since the 1980s.

It's a community that Montreal Collective Rough Diamond, composed of Alex Heggie and Priscilla Pleasant, wants to see grow and gain more awareness.

"Initially, we were sort of jealous of what other cities had going on," said Pleasant. "There was this large tour that was like Jean Grae, Invincible and Tamar-Kali, and we were talking about it. They were big underground rappers—Invincible is queer, the others are [...] ambiguous," laughed Pleasant. "They were doing this kind of grassroots tour and we wished that it would come to Montreal," added Heggie.

"We were looking on their website, and they were like 'if you're interested in having it happen in your city, you should get in touch with us.' So we did," said Heggie. They went for smaller, but as effective artists after the group found out the cost of bringing the show to town was around $10,000.

"But [we thought] maybe we could come up with a tenth of that and put on some other kind of shows," said Pleasant.

And that's exactly what happened. Their first concert was in Aug. 2011 and featured New York Queer rapper Le1f, which took place at Montreal's Pervers/Cite Festival.

"And so we were thinking, there's all these amazing shows happening in other places—New York, LA, Toronto, Philadelphia. And we're just sort of sitting around wondering why Montreal doesn't have any of this awesome stuff going on," said Pleasant. "And finally one day we just sort of got our act together. We were craving these sort of events, so we thought it would be satisfying to other people [too]."

Along with continuing to book concerts, the group hosts a monthly DJ event called Queers Pump This, at Cabaret Playhouse and formerly at the Royal Phoenix.

"Queers Pump This is definitely a rap party. We usually try to get a local person to perform a little bit, but it's not mainly a live performance party, it's a DJ party," said Heggie. "It's about doing a rap party that's all about DJs doing rap music, but also things around it like dancehall and ballroom and reggaeton and stuff too.

"That kind of sound [is] a place that's really inclusive for Queer and Trans and kind of variant people, and [that] people can feel safe going to," said Heggie, mentioning it's even more special by hosting in a way that integrates queer-made music.

They've also co-hosted fundraiser events with the Ste-Emilie Skillshare that step outside the realm of strictly hip-hop and rap.

"As far as other stuff goes, it's a little bit less hip-hop centered I would say it does have connections with spoken word and slam poetry that people in the city are doing which are also hip-hop focused, but slightly more of a stretch," said Pleasant.

"But I mean, it's also in our mandate to be primarily about Queer hip-hop, primarily about Queer people and people of colour, but not exclusively either of those things. We're also just committed to working towards Queer social change in Montreal," added Pleasant.

While hip-hop is what got them started, Rough Diamond hopes to expand by hosting more art shows, freestyling rap cyphers, and booking as many local artists as possible.

As far as the Montreal Queer artistic community as a whole, Heggie and Pleasant aren't quite sure where their collective fits in.

"I feel like a lot of people have a fantasy about the Queer community, in that it's just going to be all-embracing and all-welcoming and whatever, but it's just a group of fucked up people like any other," said Pleasant.

"I love a lot of things about the Queer community, but it's not perfect."

"It's who I am, and it's where I live," added Heggie. "And so for me it's not just sitting around and complaining about issues, it's building up and trying to make something cohesive happen."

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Queers Pump This / Cabaret Playhouse (5656 Avenue du Parc) / Feb. 18
- Man Chyna / Part of Radical Queer Semaine / Mar. 2 / Location TBA
- More info: roughdiamondmtl.tumblr.com

Queer Arts Spaces

L'Equeerie

The dream? A group of queers in Montreal are working towards the goal of opening a queer-run, non-profit, wheelchair accessible event space in Montreal.

So far it's still in the planning stages, but the group is working to raise funds by throwing events and is exploring options for investments and funding.

They plan on using DIY marketing and community outreach to get their plan out there. More info: equeerie.com.

Café Cleopatra

(1230 St. Laurent Blvd.)

The only remnant of Montreal's red-light district, Café Cleopatra is truly "the Queen of the Main." Cabarets, outrageous drag shows, live bands and workshops light up this St. Laurent mainstay, a queer-friendly space that often hosts fundraisers and events.

Pervers/Cité

A collaboratively organized summer festival, Pervers/Cité aims to make links between social justice groups, queer communities and radical visions of pride.

The idea for the festival originated in 2007 out of a desire to see a pride festival in Montreal that was about community building, but more importantly, was about returning to the radical ideals of the pride movement instead of the commercialized version we see now.

The first version of the festival was held that summer and has continued every year since. The festival generally features musical acts, film screenings, bazaars, drag shows, sex shops, workshops and way more over a week-long stretch in August.

The final event this year included a "Parade Intervention" where they crashed the Montreal Pride Parade in protest of it being over-commercialized (and sponsored by Viagra).

Ste-Emilie Skillshare

(3942 Ste. Emilie St.)

A community art space devoted to empowerment and run by people who are "trans, two-spirit, queer, indigenous, or people of colour (& friends)," Ste-Emilie hosts all kinds of workshops—past ones have included screen printing, stenciling, knitting, home brewing and fermentation, DIY sex toys and way more.

They also have a zine library, film screenings, and open studio days every Saturday. All activities are held on a pay-what-you-can basis, and are open and welcome to all.

They have been known to host clothing swaps, as well as parties and fundraisers with other local collectives.

Radical Queer Semaine

(2229 St. Catherine St. E.)

A community queerfest that runs from Feb. 23 to March 4, Radical Queer Semaine started in 2009 and has continued ever since.

The festival consists of a variety of events, workshops and parties, providing a friendly space that focuses on community building, art making, discussion and action.

The space is not only about the cool events—including workshops about queer social and personal issues, dance parties, a sewing workshop for curvy girls and a speed dating session—but also about the greater issues that have affected, and continue to affect, the queer community.

radicalqueersemaine.org

Meow Mix

(Sala Rossa, 4848 St. Laurent Blvd.)

Montreal's favourite lesbian party has been going strong for almost 15 years now.

Promoting itself as an alternative to the Village scene, Meow Mix promotes is a monthly neighbourhood cabaret and dance party at La Sala Rossa. It caters to all manner of tastes and people, with performers and DJs from eclectic musical genres.

Beginning as a space for female DJs to develop, Meow Mix has grown to include stage performances and more. Often including cabaret style acts, dancing and circus performances earlier in the night, chairs and tables are then cleared away for a dance party that rages on until Sala closes.

COMPILED BY ALEX MCGILL

Give a Dam About Consent

• OLIVER LEON

Several years ago, when I hadn't had any heavy make-out sessions, a friend told me she and her boyfriend had made out for two hours. I asked her wonderingly, "Wouldn't you get bored?" She laughed at me.

Eventually, I learned that kissing for long periods of time felt great. Fantastic, even. So much so that, once you're in the mood, it can get difficult to control yourself. But regardless of how good it feels, letting the pleasure tip over the line of consent is a no-no.

The 2110 Center for Gender Advocacy has a free sticker that defines consent as "voluntary, sober, enthusiastic, non-coerced, continual, communicated, active, [and] honest. Lack of consent is rape."

While I disagree that consent needs to be absolutely sober, I do think that it's important to try and maintain your reasoning faculties while drunkenly making out with someone. It's useful to establish whether or not you want to have sex so that no one has expectations to engage in more.

Checking in with your partner(s) about their comfort levels is important. If your partner ever says, "No", you stop what you're doing. Continuing to kiss, touch, grope, or fuck while your partner is resisting is a sexual assault and not okay. Please be careful with your sweetheart(s) today, on Valentine's Day, and every other day of the year.

In this spirit, the 2110 Center for Gender Advocacy has a safer kissing booth called DAM IT! on the mezzanine of the Hall Building starting on Valentine's Day. The cute volunteers are giving out dental dams and will show you how sensation is not lost through latex—through demonstration.

DAM IT! Kissing Booth / Feb. 14 & Feb. 15 / Hall Building mezzanine (1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd.)

Preventing Prevention

Protest Against Controversial Non-Disclosure HIV Law

• COREY POOL

PHOTO COREY POOL

A group of activists gathered outside the Montreal Superior Court Feb. 7 to protest the criminalization of non-disclosure of an HIV-positive status.

The following day, the Supreme Court of Canada heard two landmark cases on this issue in R v. Mabior and R v. DC. an HIV-positive status if risk of transmission is low.

"We think that the criminalization of non-disclosure prevents prevention," said Jordan Arseneault, editor of 2B Magazine and organizer with Radical Queer Semaine.

RQS, in conjunction with The Warning, Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois pour le sida, Stella Montreal, PolitiQ-queers soidaires, organized the demonstration.

Arseneault argued the controversial law is counter-productive in curbing the transmission of HIV.

He is not alone.

In a recent interview, Réjean Thomas—a leading researcher in the field of HIV/AIDS, and head doctor at Montreal's Actuel Clinic—put a few of these issues into perspective.

"[In Quebec,] 20 to 30 per cent of HIV positive people do not know their status, which is a huge problem related to social stigma and criminalization," said Thomas. "This means that the approximately 25 per cent of people who do not know they are HIV [positive] are responsible for 50 per cent of all new infections."

Consequently, the leading health risk for gay men, for example, remains HIV.

"The problem is that there are not currently enough resources, social, psychological and financial, to prevent high-risk [HIV] negative men and youth from getting infected," said Thomas.

Non-disclosure of your status can result in life-long jail sentences for charges ranging from aggravated assault, to sexual assault, manslaughter, or murder.

"If you threaten people with jail-time and with criminal records for not disclosing their HIV status, they're not going to disclose their HIV status," said Arseneault.

Advocates of ending the criminalization of non-disclosure argue that the law doesn't consider scientific advancements in the field of HIV prevention and violates basic human rights.

"The legal system, which is outdated and based on fear instead of prevention, is still being allowed to prosecute people for non-disclosure," said Arseneault.

Many groups including the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and UN AIDS are against the criminalization of non-disclosure of HIV status.

"These are not minority issues," said Arseneault. "This goes to the core of how we as a society conceive of illness and conceive of what the proper use of our justice system is. The justice system will not, and cannot aide prevention efforts under this law."

GREEK LIFE

McGill's Gay Fraternity a Canadian First

• KATIE MCGROARTY

Let's face it: the frat boy/sorority girl stereotype was born in the movies. From *Animal House* to *American Pie*, the booze-drinking, sports-loving college kids partying too hard while studying too little have become cultural icons—and they are overwhelmingly portrayed as heterosexual.

But things are changing, as evidenced by the McGill chapter of Delta Lambda Phi. The frat is the first gay frat in Canada. Operating out of McGill University, the fraternity is welcoming to all gay, bisexual and transgender men.

While Brotherhood Director Luke Powers acknowledged that frat culture isn't as widespread in Canada as it is in the US, there are certain stereotypes that he himself believed in prior to pledging—ones that he found out to be completely untrue.

"The stereotypes that you expect to be there weren't," Powers said. "Nerdy people to bros, fraternities are actually, in general, a pretty diverse group of people."

The frat's defiance of the alpha-male frat house stereotypes is something that President Michael D'Alimonte has been acutely aware of since joining.

"A lot of people do a double take. You have stereotypical frat dudes and stereotypical gay men—and [these ideas] kind of clash," admitted Powers. "I think the thing a lot of people aren't aware of is that we stand for the same ideals."

Breaking both visual and social stereotypes, Powers and D'Alimonte both said that what comes to mind at the prospect of a gay fraternity is very far from the truth.

Although being gay and Greek have a whole other set of connotations, Powers said that people still should know Delta Lambda Phi is a fraternity first, and orientation doesn't change its mission.

"What we have here are fraternal bonds, not sexual ones," he explained.

Since Delta Lambda Phi is faced with the unique issue of inter-fraternity relationships, however, they do have a few rules in place. Relationships with an unbalanced power dynamic—such as between members and rushes—are forbidden, and dating between brothers is allowed but not encouraged.

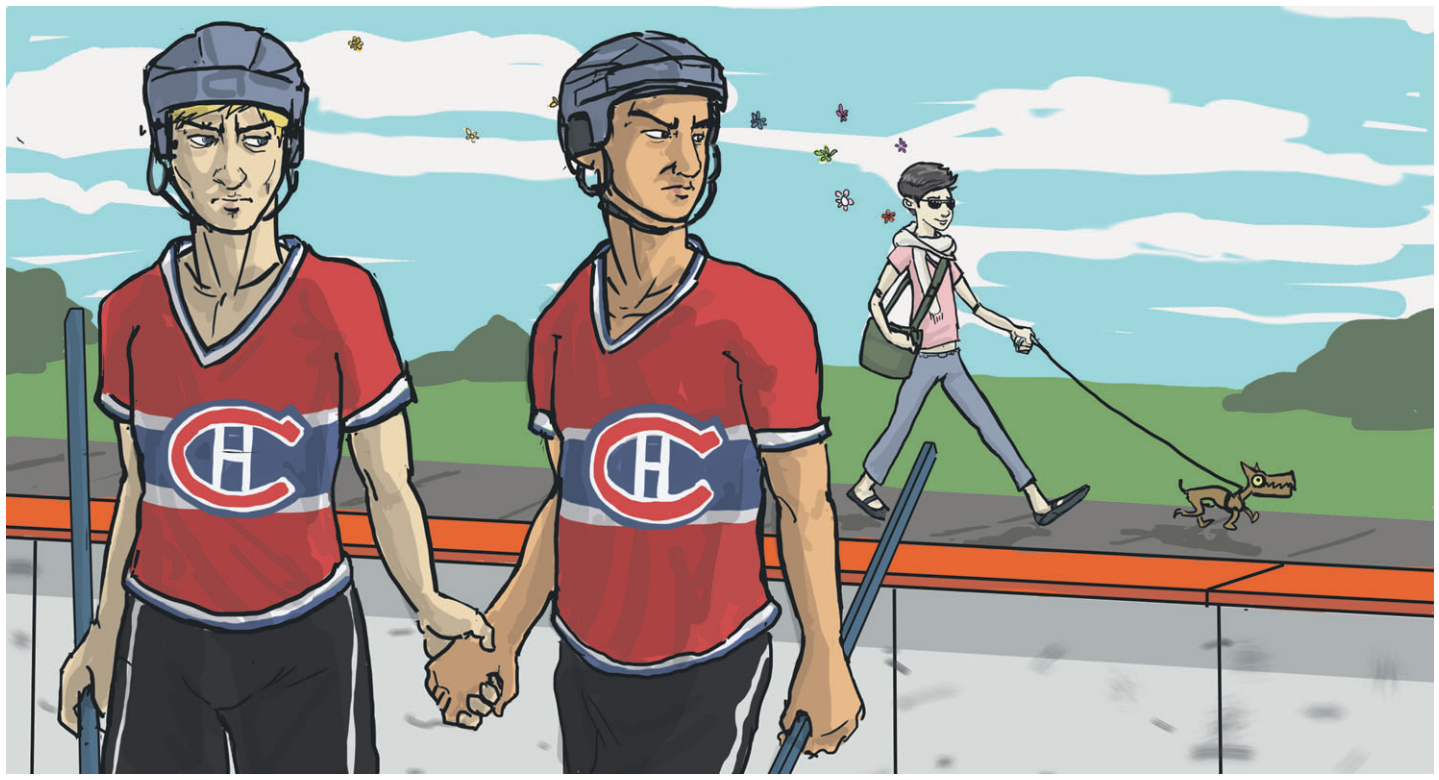
Although Delta Lambda Phi has over 20 chapters in the United States, the McGill chapter is the first in Canada. After seeing the positive effects that the frat has had on members, sexuality-based and otherwise, Powers said he hopes that other gay fraternities will soon form on university campuses across Canada.

"It should be available to anyone who is gay or bi or progressive and might want something that's not a political or religious affiliation," he said "It's social, safe and about building bonds and friendships with other gay men."

AN ODD MAN-CRUSH

BY ANDREW SCHARTMANN

> "I like dudes, but I'm not gay like that, y'know?"



GRAPHIC PAKU DAOUST-CLOUTIER

Meet "Corey," a 16-year-old Midget-AAA hockey player from Ontario who dreams of one day playing in the National Hockey League.

Like many in the minor ranks of Canada's most beloved sport, Corey comes from a small town where hockey is everything. Residents bleed their team colours day in and day out, and local bladesters enjoy near-celebrity status. Yet while most players appreciate such support, Corey finds it superficial.

"I could score 100 goals, but one peep about [being gay], and my dreams are toast."

His words are hardly surprising; homophobia in hockey is old news. But one detail in Corey's thoughts—"gay like that"—suggests that the issue may have less to do with man-on-man action than one might think.

"When the guys say 'fag' or 'homo' in the locker room, they don't mean gay like two dudes together. Think Richard Simmons—that's what they mean."

To Corey's teammates, 'fag' and 'homo' are synonymous with the effeminate male. And in their world, to be so is a shameful thing.

As Eric Anderson, author of *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*, explains, "Athletes are socialized into a very narrow arena of masculinity. [...] The punishment that is dealt out to those who do not follow the norm is so extreme that I have called it a cult of masculinity.

In this light, perhaps it is inaccurate to maintain that the problem is homophobia per se. Wouldn't it be more apt to diagnose hockey, and men's sports in general, with a severe case of effemiphobia that manifests itself as a fear of effeminate men?

Much of Corey's frustration stems from the inability of many to draw a distinction between the two.

"When people think of gay, they imagine flamboyant queens prancing around and shit. Obviously, a huge number of us aren't like that, but it doesn't matter. That's what people think. Gay means femme."

Many people do not stereotype homosexuals as such, but Corey's outlook is a product of his environment—one that replicates itself throughout small towns across the nation, where diversity wanes and simplistic views often flourish.

But does this grim reality quash the dreams of young athletes like Corey, who ache to play the game without giving a single thought to their sexuality? Is it simply that NHL players, many of whom come from small towns, bring with them the intolerant attitudes experienced by our young subject?

Patrick Burke, a scout for the Philadelphia Flyers and son of Toronto Maple Leafs' president and GM Brian Burke, is no stranger to the difficulties gays face in professional hockey. Burke's younger brother Brendan shocked the sports world when he came out of the closet in 2009.

Though he himself was relatively unknown at the time, his father's fame meant that he was the highest-profile name ever to come out in connection to the sport.

Following Brendan's untimely death in a car crash in 2010, the Burke family redoubled their efforts to promote equality and acceptance in sports. In an interview with *CTV News*, Patrick expressed his aim to rid hockey (and all sports, for that matter) of what he calls "casual homophobia." And he appears to be making some headway.

"People [...] use gay slurs, use them casually, throw them around far too often, [...] but they don't necessarily mean it. [...] Athletes are willing to change almost immediately after we've spoken to them."

As one of the foremost families in professional hockey, the Burkes wield considerable power over the minds of those aspiring to the big leagues. But what do the pros themselves think?

The answer might surprise you.

A 2006 poll published in Sports Illustrated found that 80 per cent of NHL players would back an openly gay teammate. And the support doesn't stop there.

In 2010, the Stanley Cup made its first appearance in a Gay Pride Parade when, following the Chicago Blackhawks' Cup win, defenseman Brent Sopel marched through the streets of Chicago with the silver prize in memory of Brendan Burke.

Following the 2010–11 NHL season, the New York Rangers' Sean Avery recorded a video endorsing the marriage equality campaign in New York state.

As of 2012, five of the biggest professional sports leagues in North America—the NHL, the National Basketball Association, the National Football League, Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer—have policies to protect gay employees. And more and more, high-profile athletes, such as NBA legends Charles Barkley and Grant Hill, are speaking out compassionately on behalf of gay athletes.

In Anderson's earlier-cited book, a closeted NHL player discusses being gay in professional hockey. While he admits to some difficulties, he notes a marked difference in opinion on homosexuality between the world of minor hockey and that of the NHL.

"You know, there was a lot of [homophobia] in the lower ranks, especially in high-school and college. But in the NHL we are professionals, and guys really aren't all that homophobic."

The reasons behind this apparent change remain elusive, but Corey's focus on the attitudes of his neighbours suggests one possibility.

In minor hockey, there is but a small divide between the fans and those involved in the game itself. Stand-dwellers, for the most part, include parents, friends, acquaintances and the occasional hockey scout. As such, community ideologies infiltrate the locker room freely and influence a team's unwritten codes of behaviour.

In the NHL, however, there is a distinct barrier between the game's participants and its supporters. The league sets a high standard of professionalism and punishes those who fail to abide by the rules—rules that are much less tied to the moral values of spectators.

It is also possible, of course, that shedding some of that boyhood immaturity—and travelling extensively, primarily to big, diverse cities—affects players' opinions on the matter.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that professional hockey offers some much-needed hope for Corey, who longs to play the game without fear of being ostracized by his teammates.

But what about future generations of players? How can the situation at the lower levels be improved for them?

According to Burke, the participation of career sportsmen is crucial to bettering the lives of those who are suffering.

"We need more straight and gay athletes at the professional levels to step up and say that it's okay [to be gay]. And when there's an unfortunate stereotype that a lot of gay people are more feminine and less masculine, having a masculine role model for a young male athlete would be a huge, huge step forward."

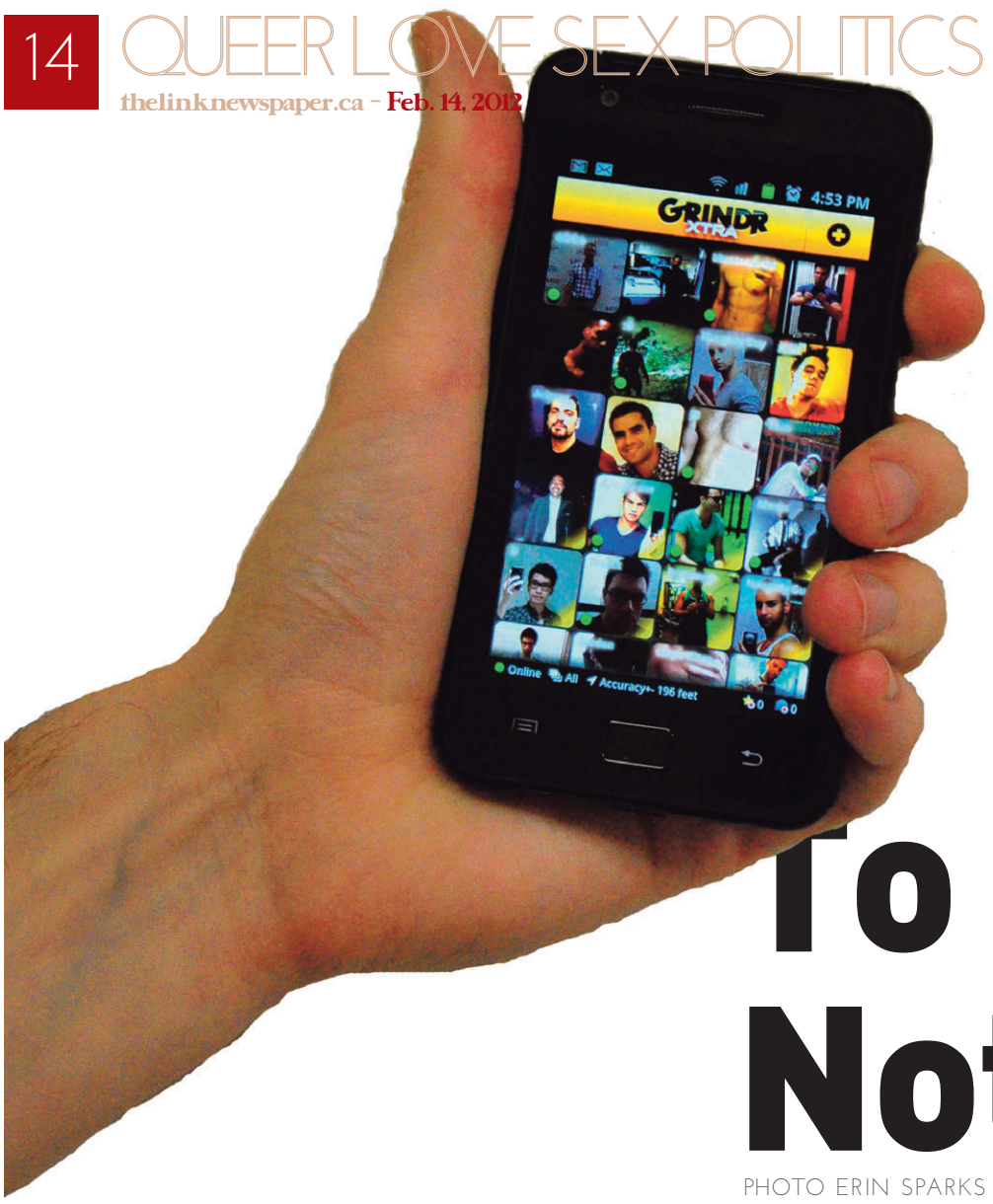
It seems odd, however, to suggest that fixing the problem should involve one of the things from which it stems: an emphasis on masculinity. But perhaps Burke has a point.

A word like "gay" refers to much more than a sexual preference: it embodies an entire culture. And for many, that culture is so far removed from daily life that it arises only in the occasional news story or television show.

Their conception of "gay" is thus influenced entirely by various forms of media, very few of which showcase the average "bro" who simply happens to prefer the company of men.

As it stands, an openly gay, elite athlete is an oxymoron in professional sports today.

But the eventual emergence of such players will force the hockey world to look at homosexuality under a new light—one that will shine on people like Corey, who still suffer silently in the darkness of attitudes even older, and even colder, than the arenas in which they play.



To Grindr/ Not to Grindr

PHOTO ERIN SPARKS

A Back-and-Forth About a Homo-App

People have long dreamt of having a better, more technological means of picking up than awkwardly approaching someone in a bar. The real world is fraught with the possibility of rejection, and... well, that's about the only thing it's fraught with. But there's a solution to all that nastiness: Grindr.

Grindr, for all of you living under a big sexless rock, is one of the earliest gay male dating applications for the iPhone and the first to successfully incorporate GPS technology into their system.

This free gay app locates local users on the scene and asserts that, "No matter where you find yourself, Grindr is the go-to app for socializing in seconds with the guys right around you."

But, as with all convenient methods of obtaining sex via the Internet, with popularity comes some controversy. *2B Mag Online* Editor Jordan Arseneault posted an anti-Grindr screed on Facebook recently, sparking a discussion with *The Link* News Editor Julian Ward.

"I boycott Grindr," read Arseneault's post. "It is a serophobic, transphobic, misogynist idiot-trap made for fucked-up, American, middle-class homo males who have to assert their sexual prowess using a Macintouch or Mandroid prosthesis."

The two queer journalists sat down to hash out the good and bad of the mobile manhunt.

Down the Rabbit Hole

Jordan Arseneault: You weren't very happy with my Facebook post the other day about Grindr. Can you tell me why?

Julian Ward: Your comment got my back up. Not only is it offensive to everyone who uses the app, but you fail to explain any of your ridiculous assertions. I know there are assholes aplenty on Grindr, but I don't think it's inherently evil.

Arseneault: Grindr is inherently misogynistic in that women and female-bodied people are excluded, and transgender and genderqueer people are routinely banned from the service. These are just a few ways in which the masculinist approach of Grindr is used as a tool for sexual encounters amongst men—it is patently misogynist.

The latent misogyny it espouses is further evidenced by the number of profiles whose users—douchebags—state they are "Masc 4 Masc," and want "No fems/fats/etc."

You are delusional if you do not acknowledge that these are misogynist attitudes writ into the functionality and 'rule-making' of this corporate communication application, buddy.

Ward: This is a product designed to help men hook up with men. If you're not such a person looking for such a thing, why would you use the product?

As for the exclusionary language used by Grindr-guys, I'm uncomfortable with the sometimes-offensive way in which it is worded, but then again, who are you to speak to the sexual desires of others? In your world, everyone should want to sleep with everyone so that we're not discriminating. That's ludicrous.

As for Grindr banning transgender female-to-male people, which I wasn't aware of, it just doesn't make business-sense. They should leave all banning to the users who have the freedom to block people that don't appeal to them.

Arseneault: First off, you wouldn't be aware of the banning of F2M and female-bodied people because, a) you're a nice guy and you would never 'report' them, and b) you're probably not looking for those people as potential sex partners—just saying.

Secondly, what I'm getting at is that, like all communication products in our age, Grindr is not neutral. It seems neutral to you because you are a (presumed HIV-negative) white, male-looking gay man seeking sex with other male-looking men.

Ward: I never said anything about Grindr being 'neutral,' but I don't really see how it isn't—except for when it comes to blocking certain people, which I've already addressed. I also don't see how being a white, HIV-negative person who looks male and seeks sex from other male-looking individuals has anything to do with anything.

Arseneault: You have just proven how incredibly naive you actually are. You also seem unable to acknowledge that your comfort level with Grindr comes from you being a non-racialized, non-effeminate, non-HIV-positive person.

Let me tell you about Grindr's World AIDS Day message, which was the straw that broke the camel's back for me: "It's World AIDS Day! Grindr supports safe sex. Everyone should get tested regularly and stay safe!," said Grindr.

Essentially, their message was, "Everyone stay negative!," instead of recognizing that World AIDS Day is a day when most humane organizations focus on the plight of HIV-positive people. The delusional, oppressive message was serophobic because it erases the fact that between seven to 25 per cent of North American urban gay males are HIV-positive.

The Grindr message essentially fed into the denialism that in order to be sexually active in an open way, you should be, and remain, HIV-negative. This is simply not an accurate reflection of its own target demographic: urban gay men with iPhones.

Ward: Are you suggesting that 'racialized' and 'effeminate' people are uncomfortable using the service? Then why are there so many people of different races and 'levels of masculinity' on the service? It sounds like you're offended on their behalf because they're too busy getting laid to care.

As for the World AIDS Day message, I agree it's insensitive, but I don't think it was malicious. It sounds like they just need to get themselves educated and also realize the power that their messages wield.

Arseneault: Why do you continue to defend this app? Is this a focus group? OMGay, you are so not getting me.

Ward: No, this is not a focus group. You can't possibly ignore, though, that Grindr is incredibly popular among millions of people in nearly 200 countries, and that simply willing it away will do nothing. If something more popular and more inclusive comes along, I can only hope it does to Grindr what Facebook did to MySpace.

Actually Grindr is, in fact, a lot like Facebook—the same medium through which you posted your initial message. Like Facebook, Grindr is just too popular for people to stop using. And, like Facebook, the policies of Grindr can be changed if enough public pressure is applied. But until that happens, Grindr as we know it is going nowhere.

In Closing

Arseneault: In the end, my friend from *The Link* indicated that he was not intending to engage in the infinite apologetics of Grindr, but instead expressed the belief that somehow, a critical mass of more inclusive people would yield a new, friendlier, less 'evil' sex app.

My approach of boycotting Grindr was dismissed as a fringe attempt to resist the monolith and its enduring popularity. For Ward: it is now up to some enterprising queer to make a better version in order to free us from the application that gets us so laid, so locally, so quickly, but at such great cost to our ethical self-worth.

Ward: As for Arseneault, who so boldly defended promiscuity and the right of people to get laid as often as they please, jumping ship is the only way to escape the everything-phobic Grindr world.

There is no sleeping with the beast, waiting for it to evolve or be taken over by a friendlier Monstr. Choke the lizard! How, though, Mr. Arseneault, do you plan on getting laid? I've never cruised otherwise.

A Scandalous Affair

A Link-Exclusive Erotic Fiction

by Heathcliff Par DiBodom & Ruby Valentine

In the upscale Mayfair district in the West End of London, Alistair Harrow and his wife Edith sit drinking tea and eating flavorless biscuits by their living room window.

Alistair is bored, moving his gaze from the window to the fireplace, to his wife's pinched face. They've just celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary, and Edith twists the ruby and gold ring Alistair presented to her around on her index finger.

He suggests opening a bottle of red, but Edith lets out a long yawn, delicately covering her mouth with her decorated hand. She heads up to bed instead, leaving Alistair to his own devices.

Alistair waits until he thinks Edith is asleep, then grabs his long black coat from the rack and slips out the front door, wrapping himself cape-like and heading out into the foggy night.

The street lamps are the only source of light. They shine a murky yellow through the fog, lighting Alistair's path. A bell chimes somewhere in the distance. It's the witching hour.

He soon comes to a darkened building in a seedy part of town—but hears faint music and commotion coming through the walls. Intrigued, he decides to enter by the back door to investigate.

As he steps into the darkness, a pair of hands, as if from nowhere, thrust a mask at him and place it firmly on his face before disappearing into the shadows.

The room is huge and cavernous—filled with masked faces and naked bodies participating in all kinds of lewd acts.

He has never seen so many as three people passionately fucking all at once, let alone this many. There must be dozens, and the sheer smell of them all is overpowering.

He scans the room, his eyes adjusting to the darkness. He sees a man elbow deep in another man's asshole. Nearby, two midgets lie curved like commas, simultaneously sucking at each other's loins. Another man is penetrating a braying mule tied to the far wall while a woman lays on top of the animal, rubbing at her crotch and moaning loudly.

Several people are tied up and are being whipped. He can now begin to distinguish between the strains of the smell—he detects shit, now, and cum, and opium mixed with cigarette smoke. Their combined pong hangs thickly in the air—but he finds that he's beginning to appreciate it, despite himself.

A fat man is feasting on all manner of indulgent, expensive food, rubbing it over his huge bare chest and stomach while a thin woman sucks his prick. She massages his thighs as he places cream pie in her hair.

Alistair stares at the naked, writhing, masked forms before him, and notices a heat burning in his loins unlike any he's ever encountered before. He approaches a pale, sweaty body on the outskirts of the action and hesitantly places his nose to the nape of the neck, inhaling the salty scent.

He detects a faint quiver, and then a moan of pleasure. He's invited in.

Delighted, Alistair works his way down the back, lightly and delicately touching the soft pale hairs at the precious point, the small of the back. He finds the magnificent asshole and, abandoning all inhibition, thrusts his nose at it, relishing the deep, earthy scent.

Thrilled, he continues to the testicles, beautiful and nearly hairless. He presses his entire face at them, feeling the mask push into thigh-flesh, and begins delicately licking and smelling ejaculate from men that have quite literally cum before him, the crotch reeking of sweaty flesh and saliva.

He hasn't been with another man since his days at Eton, but the pleasure of it is coming back to him.

The young man gives a girlish giggle and moves his arse back and forth in Alistair's face, taunting him.

Alistair grabs his hips and, without losing eye contact with his new catamite, lays his lithe, delicate body back over a nearby barrel of ale, rubbing the precum from his bare, engorged cock all over the fop's asshole as he writhes and moans in deep pleasure.

The twink moans louder and gives Alistair a look that says, "Take me now."

Alistair lifts the fop's legs and forcibly penetrates him. His newfound submissive lets out a cry of intense pleasure, and Alistair starts pumping, fucking him slowly at first but quickly gaining momentum.

With each thrust the fop lets out a high-pitched moan. He's subservient and sexually passive and Alistair relishes conquering him. He thrusts harder and harder, closing his eyes and smiling to himself.

Suddenly, he feels a soft, delicate touch on his buttocks. He feels the swell of breasts press against his back and hands touching his shoulders, and then his lower back, moving down to grab his balls and finger his asshole.

He feels the nipples harden with arousal. He is still inside the smaller man, his testicles bouncing against his ass.

The mystery woman moves away from Alistair and picks up a gigantic glass phallus. She takes it and rubs it between Alistair's ass cheeks. The cool sensation makes the hairs on the back of his neck stand at attention with his pulsating member.

Alistair feels the woman steady herself against him and then begin to rub her clitoris, letting out soft moans as she does. She brings the dildo to Alistair's lips, and he surprises himself by complying fully, taking it to the back of his throat and gagging.

Once wet she takes the dildo from his mouth and, groaning loudly, pushes it inside her. Rubbing her breasts and pushing herself up against Alistair, she gyrates, audibly voicing her pleasure.

She slides it in and out, getting more and more wet, then pulls the dildo out of her, slick with her woman juices and pushes it up to Alistair's eager hole. She swings her hips from side to side, hinting that she can't wait.

"I'm going to fuck you senseless," she whispers in Alistair's ear.

She pushes the wetted tip of the glass penis into Alistair's tight asshole, slowly pushing it all the way inside. She lets out a cry and hoists herself up, wrapping her right arm around his shoulder and straddling his waist to better thrust deep into the depths of Alistair's posterior.

He continues fucking the fop, who is in an almost euphoric state of ecstasy.

She thrusts the glass member in and out quickly, syncing up her rhythm with his as he continues to grind away at the ecstatic, willing form before him.

Eventually Alistair reaches a plateau of unimaginable pleasure, and, unable to contain himself any longer, blows a gigantic load inside the boy-slut's asshole. He cries out in unfathomable joy and satisfaction.

In tandem, the fop lets loose a cry to the heavens and sprays his semen into the air, groaning with delight. With the youth's cum raining on all of them, all three are caught in a moment of ecstasy that seems to stretch on forever.

The twink climbs down from his fucking-platform and starts to lick his juices off of his pederast's chest and stomach. He licks his own lips with delight, savouring every drop.

The woman pulls the glass cock out of Alistair, glistening with a faint hint of blood, and smiles to herself. Alistair turns and embraces her, his cock still throbbing and dripping cum all over her thighs and the floor. She presses her engorged clit against his leg, calm in the orgasmic afterglow.

When he finally pulls away he sees it—the ring, a vivid flaming ruby set in gold on her index finger.

THE LiNK

SPECIAL ISSUE

INTO THE NUIT: A MINI-GUIDE TO THE WHITE NIGHT • PAGE 12

CANVASSING THE MASSES

It's all about mutual inspiration with Aquil Virani's latest exhibition. PHOTO ADAM SCOTTI

Aquil Virani on Accessible Art Practice

• KATIE MCGROARTY

If you've ever felt intimidated by an art show, alienated by performance art or just like you didn't understand, Aquil Virani wants to teach you a thing or two.

"Being an artist is a mental attitude," he said. "If you feel like an artist, you are an artist. Period."

Combining doodles and the oft-uttered phrase, "I can't draw," Virani would not have been able to start his latest work without the help of self-professed "non-artists."

Presenting strangers with a ripped-out piece of sketchbook paper ("It's less intimidating that way") and then asking them to draw on it is something he's gotten quite accustomed to. Collecting hundreds of doodles of stick men, smiley faces and characters of the 'artist's' choosing, he then re-draws all of the pictures as one on a canvas.

"In order for the projects to work out, it's best to take inspiration from other people," he said. "I can paint something, have it up on a wall and have people validate it, [but] it's much more fulfilling when you can share the creation process as well."

With his experiences along the way fueling his creative drive, Virani has taken that very idea as the theme of his second solo exhibit, *COPYCAT*. Everything displayed will, in some form, be a by-product of two different pieces.

Whether it is simply a new take on a renowned painting or a project stemming from hundreds of artists, he is hoping that the pretention too often associated with contemporary art will dissipate—and people will realize that they, too, can be artists.

"[During the process] you realize that only like, two per cent of people think they can draw," he says. "It's almost frustrating for me to hear that, because the reason they feel that way is because there's a stigma associated with contemporary art, like it's exclusive and you can't understand it."

On top of making art available to all, Virani also wants more people to realize that art doesn't have to be a full-time dedication. Whether it's a regular hobby or something done only in the margins of notebooks, it can be for anyone.

"Some will say something like, 'Oh, I sing'—but that doesn't mean you can't draw," he said. "That, for me, is a huge point: making art accessible, making people understand it, even if they haven't taken a course in art history or anything."

While Virani says that his unconventional process is personally rewarding, it's also a unique experience helping people realize that they can be a part of something they may not have thought was possible.

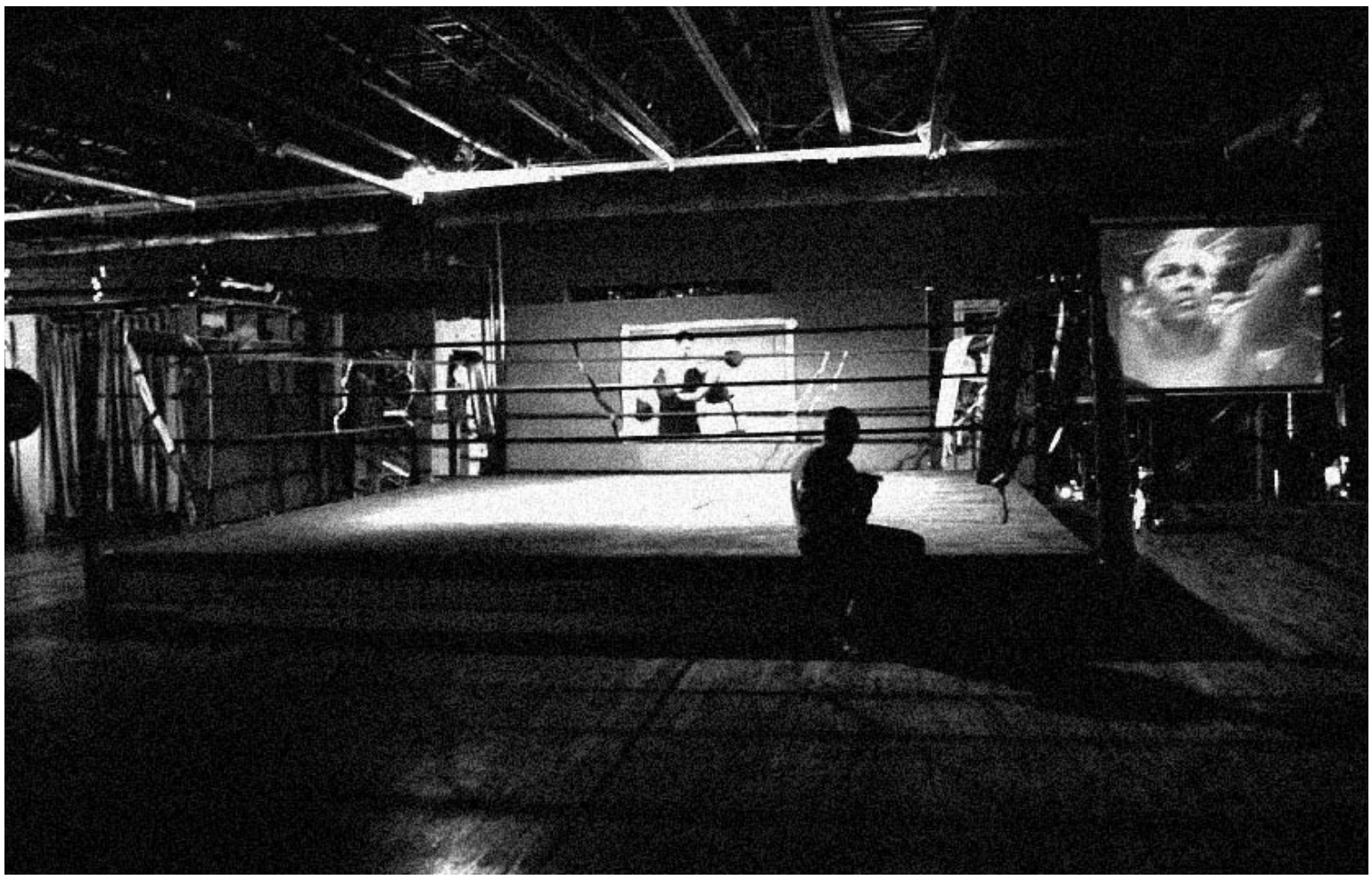
"That quote, [...] 'Happiness is only real when shared,'" he said. "That's what I get out of this. It wouldn't be the same if I couldn't involve people like I do."

***COPYCAT* / Feb. 14 / Leacock Building (855 Sherbrooke St. West) / aquil.ca**

> **"Being an artist is a mental attitude. If you feel like an artist, you are an artist. Period."**
>
> *–Aquil Cirani*

A City of Festivals

Art Matters Explores Art and Athleticism at Nuit Blanche



• ALEX MCGILL

"I cultivated a weird fetish for boxing this summer," said Zoe Koke, exhibitions coordinator for the 2012 edition of Art Matters, when asked about the theme for the long-running Concordia art festival's upcoming event *In Our Time*.

"That expanded into starting to consider the differences between art audiences and sporting audiences, and what divided artistic and athletic performances."

On Feb. 25, Art Matters is teaming up with Nuit Blanche and the Blue Cat Boxing Club for a special one-night event a week before the official festival launch March 2. The evening will be an interactive performance that builds a relationship between sports—specifically, boxing—and performance art.

"A friend of mine told me that Blue Cat Boxing had an event that merged boxing and folk music in the past," said Koke, who organized the event along with special events coordinator Caro Loutfi and contemporary dance students and curators Linnea Gwiazda and Carolann Shea.

"I knew that we needed to revive this concept for this year's festival," said Koke.

In Our Time will focus on the athleticism of dance and the artistry of boxing—that is, the opposite of what is traditionally expected from each practice—through a series of sound, dance, theatre and visual performances punctuated by boxing rounds and offset by visual artwork on display.

The performances will take place between midnight and 3:00 a.m. at Blue Cat Boxing Club, in the Mile End.

"We have focused on the ways in which contemporary art can merge with community when conceptualizing this year's festival.

"The Nuit Blanche event we have planned will hopefully have people thinking about the insularity of fine arts, the conventions of the art world and the conduct of art world audiences," explained Koke.

"We are hoping to illuminate how the institutional constructs of the art world define the reception of art, while still embracing these constructs too—we are after all, an art school festival that centers on the ability to feature artwork in various local art spaces here in Montreal," she continued.

"I guess ultimately, this is a questioning of art's role in society, outside of the art world. A boxing studio as a venue, with boxing as a staged performance in the company of art performances speaks to this."

The Nuit Blanche and Art Matters festivals—both of which kicked off in 2000—have since developed into mainstays in the Montreal art community, so a collaboration only makes sense.

"Montreal is a city of festivals. It has a transient student community and it seems to glow during these temporary and intense celebrations of local talent," said Koke.

"Art Matters gives students the ability to experiment and gain knowledge and experience in the art world within the scope of their undergraduate education, which is incredibly unique. Nuit Blanche is a tried-and-true Montreal art staple."

In Our Time will also serve as the launch for the 2012 Art Matters program guide, which will outline the art exhibitions, speaker series, the Art Crawl and other events.

***In Our Time* / Feb. 25 / Blue Cat Boxing Club (435 Beaubien St. W., 4th floor) / 12:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. / artmattersfestival.org**

POP MONTREAL & CCA TEAM UP FOR NUIT BLANCHE

• COLIN HARRIS

POP Montreal and the Canadian Centre for Architecture are collaborating for the second year in a row for a night combining the best both organizations have to offer—and in true Nuit Blanche spirit, it's offered for free.

The CCA is opening up its two running exhibits, *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* and *Imperfect Health*, to be explored throughout the night.

The former places the sketchwork of Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza beside photos by Martín Chambi, whose art aimed to reclaim the appropriated imagery of Machu Picchu.

Imperfect Health examines the relationship fitness and health anxiety has with architecture and urban planning.

"It's a great building. I've been to parties there over the years and it's a really great place to go and explore," said POP co-founder Dan Seligman. "And most of the people who go to indie-rock shows aren't used to museums or the CCA, so it's nice to go outside the comfort zone."

With bands, DJs and projectionists, this Nuit Blanche event is basically a big free party in a downtown museum. The event was a huge success last year, so much that some lined up at the door to catch the night's set by local synthstress Grimes, among others, and all signs point to the same kind of energy for next Saturday.

The partnership seems to come naturally, with the two groups having a similar work ethic and audience.

"[Last year] came about discussions of us wanting to become closer to an event that we felt was akin to the CCA in a curatorial approach," said CCA Associate Director of Communications John MacDonald. "We're very specific in who we want to target, and we felt POP was a natural fit to the audiences that we are trying to speak to."

"We love what POP are doing in terms of how they curate their content, and the bands that they sort of nurture and bring through their own programming," he said.

With the multidisciplinary annual festival always looking for new interesting spaces and collaborators, POP Montreal has found a good home for Nuit Blanche in the CCA: a creative space where people can let loose on a dark winter night.

"[We chose] good party bands; the idea is to have fun and get people dancing, nothing too complicated," said Seligman. POP selected locals Goose and UN to take the stage this year, preceded by sets from DJ K-Lord and VJ Mathieu Jacques.

"What we're doing this year is really compounding on the success of last year's event," said MacDonald. "We want to showcase emerging new talent in a way that reflects the existing programs that the CCA are producing. The Nuit Blanche comes as an opportunity to have a bit of fun, and step out of our normal programming."

Inspired by the work-in-progress theme of *Alturas de Macchu Picchu*, the CCA is holding activities for visitors to create their own works. Earlier in the day there are family activities like Lego building, and later a Drink and Draw, an event put on with drawing groups En Masse and Urban Sketchers.

The events go on all day and all night, and the only thing that costs money is the CCA's architecture bus tour. They'll also be serving free hot chocolate to fuel your adventures around the city. But no matter what time you drop in, there will be music and visuals ready for you to engage in.

"[POP] provides a lovely backdrop to the CCA content, and vice-versa really, so it's a nice partnership," said MacDonald.

POP Montreal & CCA Nuit Blanche / Feb. 25 / Canadian Centre for Architecture (1920 Baile St.)

TOPS to Pop Off

Ex-Silly Kissers Prepare North American Debut

• GUILLERMO MARTÍNEZ DE VELASCO

For TOPS, a new name is more than a fresh paintjob.

You probably haven't heard of them before, though the Montreal band has actually been around for a few years now—thye had just called themselves the Silly Kissers.

Undergoing a slight lineup readjustment, they're sporting a brand-new sound as well, moving from light pop to heavy, nostalgia-infused tracks.

TOPS—who have been compared in various press to Ariel Pink and Fleetwood Mac—are up-and-coming once again the local scene. With an album set to be released at the end of the month, as well as a performance at this year's South by Southwest music festival in Austin, TX, the indie-darling sound seems set to grow.

Lead singer and keyboardist Jane Penny brought us up to speed on the band's evolution from a church bazaar in the Plateau.

After admiring the wares, it wasn't long before the earring affectionado was talking about the upcoming release of TOPS' first album, *Tender Opposites*, coming out Feb. 28 on Arbutus Records.

"It's all TOPS," she confirmed when asked if any of the music from Silly Kissers had been carried forward to this new project.

Penny said she saw the album as a document of everything the band have done so far: the shows they've played, the places they've visited, and the parties they've attended.

"It's a nice mix of classic instrumentation and more of a modern sound," said Penny, explaining that the album mixes personal reflection with a fantastical "heaven narrative."

Tender Opposites was recorded and mixed by TOPS at the Montreal institution that is La Brique, a warehouse-cum-music space in the Mile End. The mastering process was put in the hands of Seb Cowan, who, in addition to running Arbutus, also happens to be a music engineer.

One of the reasons La Brique, which doubles as a live venue, has survived for so many years is that it's firmly embedded in an industrial patch of the city, surrounded by empty warehouses not much different from itself.

Concert spaces in more populated areas are often not so lucky in Montreal, which has a nasty habit of shutting down its most promising local playing spaces, in a weird game of cultural whack-a-mole between the city and the scene.

"It's a constant struggle," said Penny. "Every time a place gets shut down, a new one opens." One venue that has managed to continue operating throughout the years is Il Motore, which will be hosting TOPS' album launch party on March 1st.

Besides the album release and the upcoming party, Penny was also excited for her first tour with TOPS. The roadtrip will take them down the east coast into Austin, Texas for SXSW, followed by a steady climb north up the west coast.

The Prairie kids came to Montreal to pursue music after experiencing a lack of interest and audience. "Montreal is a great place to start because people are interested in new music and are loyal to local acts."

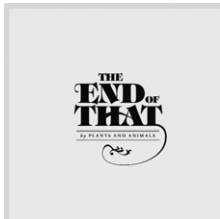
TOPS (w/ Mac DeMarco and Steve JR) / Mar. 1 / Il Motore (179 Jean Talon St. W.)

BEST OF THE WEB

DAILY COVERAGE AT THELINKNEWSPAPER.CA

WEEKLY SPINS

Hometown indie rockers Plants and Animals may have just produced their tour de force. This incredible offering is their most accessible, upbeat and impressive material yet. While 'mature' may be a little cliché, to say the band is more accomplished and diversified seems more accurate because this is exactly what has happened with The End of That.

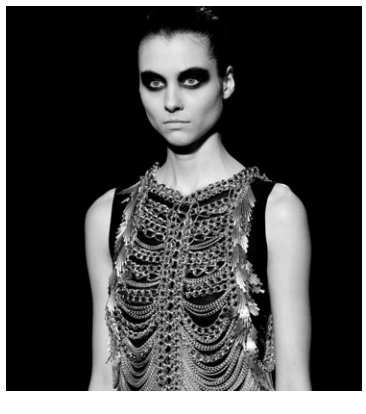


WOLF WATCHING

"Light skin, dark hair and not one ounce of exuberance, she sits down in front of me. The first few minutes before our interview remind me strangely of a few blind dates I had in the past, nervous laughs and awkward silences included. We are both, for very different reasons, seemingly nervous. Pon-Layus's work is both unsettling and deeply meditative, and I'm eager to discuss the foundations of these controversial images with her."

FASHION WEEK

The Link *was at Montreal Fashion Week this weekend, check out the pics on our media gallery and read our profiles on designers Abol and Anastasia Lomonova.*



SIZE MATTERS: TUITION ABOUT MORE THAN MONEY

TWO IN THE PINK, ONE IN THE KINK

My girlfriend and I have a healthy, active sex life that is fully satisfying. However, we have tried to expand it in several ways, including blindfolding and sex in public. I am writing you to ask your suggestions of other mildly kinky things to try.

—Kinky on the Brain

So you wanna get your kink on… but not completely.

Before we continue, I have to warn you that this isn't "*Cosmo*'s Kinky 101"—I'm not going to tell you to lick salt off each other's sweaty bodies or bite her armpits.

My idea of "mildly kinky" might be different than yours, so you'll definitely have to add or remove kink intensity (kink-tensity!) where you can, but I've tried to give it some variety so hopefully there'll be something for everyone.

Hand Solo

As basic as it might seem, masturbating in front of each other can be incredibly erotic, and educational too. Take turns enjoying the show and learning more about how your partner likes to be touched. To take it up a notch, bring in toys—how intense that gets is really your call.

Make Your Own Porn Stash

Yes, that's porn *stash*, not porn '*stache*. Film or take pictures of yourself masturbating to send and give to your partner—or film yourselves doing it and watch it together later.

Sending a hot picture of yourself to your partner while you're out can also be a fun way to tease them, or initiate public sex. Just be sure to send it to the right person—and delete it or store it in a safe place afterward!

Sexy Strangers

Role-playing can be a huge turn-on, and if you're already messing around with public sex, this can be a fun next step. Run into each other somewhere, use different names, (or maybe disguises) and think up sexy scenarios together.

If you're lacking inspiration or just feel silly, watching porn together and then acting a scene out can help get things started with a script.

Tie 'Er Up

I don't classify "light" bondage as the time to whip out those fancy scouting knots, but rather using unlocked cuffs, or a scarf to tie your partner at the hands, legs, or both.

The light part is that you're testing the bondage waters, and at any point the tied person can escape (which can also turn into a sexy situation). This can be intensified at any point by tying real knots and making use of a safeword—a word you and your partner agree on beforehand to signal someone's discomfort with what's happening.

Depending on the situation, "No," "Don't" or "Stop" might seem like part of the fun, but a safeword should stick out.

Something like "banana" might work, for example.

Give Anal Play a Try

I know some people are pretty wary of the ass, but if you haven't already and you're curious, maybe it's time to take that leap.

Again, anal play can vary greatly in intensity. It could mean just rubbing the outside of your partner's anus, licking it when you're already down there, fingering or full-on fucking. Just rubbing or fingering can still be intense when paired with other acts (oral/vaginal penetration), so take it as far as you want to go.

When it comes down to it, kink is really about trust and boundaries. Pushing your boundaries, feeling comfortable enough to voice them, and trusting that your partner will accept when you've reached them.

—Melissa Fuller

Submit questions anonymously at sex-pancakes.tumblr.com and check out "Sex & Pancakes" on Facebook.

Cameras *in the* Courtroom

PHOTO DAVID MURPHY

Repercussions for Rioting Should Be Transparent

• DAVID MURPHY

Like a referee going over an instant replay in hockey, videos of the Vancouver riot on Jun. 15, 2011 are being looked over meticulously by the Vancouver Police Department, and the viewing public are yelling at their televisions, wanting to be involved.

There is no question about who was the best team in the 2011 Stanley Cup Finals and no question who was in the wrong after the game. But in hockey, if there's a dubious goal, the public is allowed to see the replay—and judge for themselves.

That's why B.C. Provincial court judge Malcolm Maclean's decision on Monday to not let cameras in the courtrooms for the prosecution of rioters involved in the mischief last spring is wrong.

Vancouverites want to know if those accused of rioting, destruction, mischief, breaking and entering—and a slew of other charges—crossed the line or not.

So why shouldn't people be allowed to watch justice being served to rioters who were gleefully bashing tire-irons and hockey sticks against windows in downtown Vancouver?

Vancouverites deserve a measure of retribution after they watched in agony while their city's core—and image—was decimated.

These idiots racked up an estimated $5 million in damages and devastated the city's reputation, undoing, in the span of a few hours, a year's worth of deserved acclaim for a job well done at the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Fortunately, those who filmed the event, originally deemed nuisances for encouraging rather than discouraging the rioters, were the ones trying to slam the door on the criminals.

Cameras might be one of the most common pieces of technology today, and those who lost their minds during the riot also lost the idea that they were being watched—and recorded.

It turns out you don't need an Orwellian police state to catalogue a riot's every move; just the general population and their cell phones.

Local newspapers, *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*, just released 5,500 photos of the riot, and those snapping pictures in the madness handed over thousands of photos and hours of footage. Ultimately, the press and the public produced much more evidence than the police could ever have collected.

Given the public's involvement in getting the accused their dates in court by submitting evidence and identifying rioters, their trials will be inescapably public decisions. And the rioters should have their shamefully deserved 15 minutes of infamy in front of yet another camera in court.

This isn't just any privacy case. If the British Columbian justice system cracked the whip on this riot, thanks to the people documenting the event, it would have set a significant precedent for other major-scale events across the country and would have decreased the potential for future riots breaking out. Fear of extreme public humiliation is a great deterrent.

However, the Supreme Court of British Columbia missed a glorious opportunity to set this benchmark, leaving the door closed in the courtroom for public debate, but open for the defendant to higher an expensive, proven lawyer and get sent home with a sore wrist.

Privacy advocates can kick up all the fuss they want, but today we expect transparency—to *see* justice served—and Vancouverites certainly won't put up with the rioters who gave their city an international black eye.

Why can't we live in a country where the action, effects, causes and conclusions are seen and deemed fair or not? How do we know if there's a problem with our justice system if the general public can't gauge fair decisions—especially in cases where they played such a significant role in putting the accused on the stand?

Cameras need to be in courtrooms in public cases like these, and it should have started with the prosecution of the Vancouver rioters.

Tax the Fat

It's Time to Get Serious About Canada's Obesity Epidemic

• ALEX WOZNICA

Faced with a growing obesity epidemic, Canadians clearly need more reasons to put down their Pepsis and chocolate bars. As widening waistlines have proven insufficient motivation, perhaps the solution is to hit people where it really hurts—in their wallets.

Though some may consider that below the belt, at this point approximately one in four Canadians can be classified as obese, which is twice as many as there were in 1980.

While such astounding figures clearly have very serious health implications for those directly affected, all Canadian taxpayers are being forced to pay more and more for the swelling economic costs of obesity.

By the end of the last decade, the annual economic cost of obesity in Canada was almost $5 billion—nearly 20 per cent higher than the figure from 2000. Recent annual costs could even be as high as $7 billion if one includes those costs associated with illnesses directly linked to obesity.

If this trend continues, obesity could very well be costing Canadians almost $9 billion a year by the end of this decade.

Something needs to change and, at this point, direct government action seems like the only option, since neither the free market nor doctors telling patients to "eat right and get lots of exercise" seem to have had any effect in that regard.

While it would be great if the government could legally pursuade everyone to exercise, short of democracy being replaced by benevolent totalitarianism, this seems unlikely to occur.

What would be much more realistic however, would be for the state to hinder the purchase of the sorts of foods whose consumption directly leads to obesity.

This idea is not without precedent. Provincial governments across Canada have been adding special taxes to products that they deem to be harmful for decades.

Alcohol and tobacco are prime examples: tobacco products receive additonal 10-15 per cent sin-tax, and alcoholic beverages receive an additonal $0.40 to $2.00 per litre.

While this kind of taxation works to discourage (however slightly) the use of such products, it also helps pay for the $3.5 billion spent on health care for people who are hospitalized due to their tobacco use, for example.

GRAPHIC MIRIAM ARSENAULT

Tobacco use has gone down over 50 per cent since the early 1970s, when state attempts to curb the use of that product began in earnest.

As well, the sorts of foods linked to obesity could be made less available and less visible, much like with tobacco and alcohol products. Advertising such products to children could be banned, and their advertisement in general could be seriously curtailed.

Their purchase could also be tied to an age requirement, thus increasing the likelihood of informed and responsible purchase. While these measures may seem both drastic and draconian, obesity is a serious problem with serious effects for all Canadians.

By imposing a tax on unhealthy foods, Canada could become a place where the casual overconsumption of junk foods is not an economically viable option, which would go a long way towards helping Canada improve the health of its citizens—and its economy.

BIGGER IS BETTER: THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST TUITION

• MATTHEW BRETT

The upcoming student general strike against the $1,625 tuition fee hike in Quebec should be taken seriously by anyone who wants to win this fight.

The Liberal government will ignore students unless its power or legitimacy is seriously threatened, and a sustained general student strike can effectively challenge the government.

More importantly, the student movement should not limit its actions and analysis to tuition, as some have recently suggested.

After a very successful protest on Feb. 2, *The Link* quoted former Concordia Student Union councillor Tomer Shavit, who said, "Any other cause that is affixed to the tuition fight can lead to divisiveness and so should be treated with caution."

This kind of flawed thinking raises two important issues.

First, of course, the student movement is about more than tuition. Even supposing that the fight is limited to the cost of education, this still raises serious questions about poverty and inequality. After all, those in financial difficulty are under the greatest threat from these hikes.

A government-issued report estimates that university enrolment will drop by 2.5 per cent, meaning that thousands of people in financial hardship will be denied their right to a university education. So this is not simply a fight about tuition fees. It is a fight for social equality against very powerful interests.

Second, it is wrong to believe that broadening the student movement beyond tuition will divide the movement and harm the fight against tuition hikes. Quite the opposite is true. The success of the movement may hinge on its ability to broaden the struggle.

To give a clear example, the Nov. 10 Day of Action protest last year was successful precisely because other factional divisions were overcome in a spirit of friendship and solidarity.

Environmental groups, anti-war activists, healthcare workers and teachers were on the streets in solidarity with the students. These links are deepening with time. In other words, a genuine social movement may be emerging.

There remains some hope that the upcoming student general strike across Quebec will trigger a broader mass movement in the province. Union activists in Quebec have been working in this direction, but they remain weak and on the defensive against continuing layoffs.

The upcoming provincial budget may be the trigger that sparks a broader movement, so we can assume that the Liberals will be treading lightly with this budget. The Occupy movement also remains a wildcard for this spring.

The point is that levels of solidarity are deepening amidst all this chaos, debate and division, and the student movement urgently needs to do the opposite of what Shavit suggests.

Remaining narrowly focused on our particular struggle is more divisive than deepening links with other causes and movements. We need to step outside of our institutions to create stronger levels of solidarity with a spectrum of groups that support the fight for accessible or free education.

Above all, it is critically important to recognize that all of these struggles are connected.

This is ultimately about an economic and political system that increasingly favours the rich, and students need to start fighting back against the rich if we are to have any meaningful impact.

Frank Lévesque-Nicol, the spokesperson for the Feb. 2 protest, said, "More and more people are starting to realize that the real problem behind the rising tuition fees and the commodification of education is something related to a socioeconomic system that is behind it all."

And with the ever-increasing gap between the economically elite and the rest of us, that seems all the more accurate.

Simply looking at existing policies, it is clear that the Liberal government cares more about bankers and multinational mining companies in Quebec than it cares about its indigenous people and the swelling ranks of the working poor.

Remember that the impending $1,625 tuition hikes were introduced in the 2010 budget, which aims to kill the "sacred cows" of Quebec—accessible education and healthcare—to use the words of Liberal finance minister Raymond Bachand.

The government itself is heavily influenced by corporate powers that support the existing order. Bachand received a warm welcome when introducing his budget to select corporate leaders at a luncheon organized by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal in April of 2010.

He took the opportunity to stress that corporate income taxes will remain untouched. On the same day, tens of thousands of people were protesting against the budget in the middle of Montreal's financial district.

Why was Bachand with the small cadre of corporate elites rather than on the streets with the voting masses? This gives a very clear picture of who this government works for. Bachand and the Charest Liberals are siding with the rich minority instead of the struggling majority.

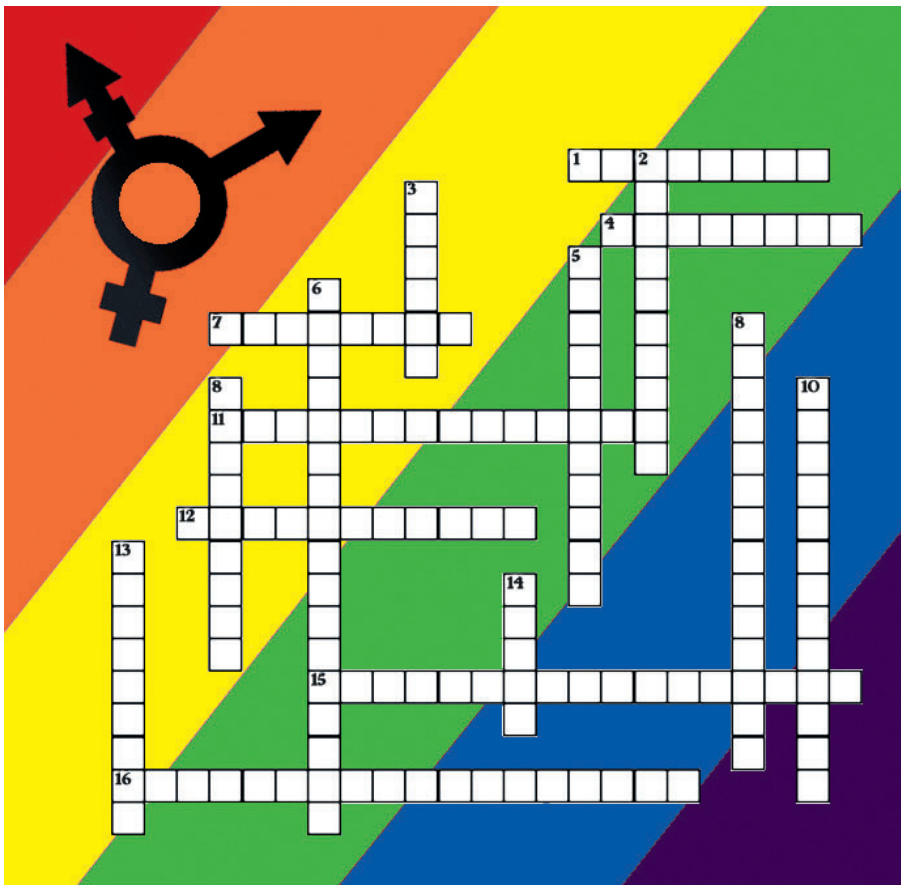
Looked at in this way, this tuition fight is ultimately a struggle between competing classes, and it is clear which class is winning. The only way to turn the tide is to bring the fight to the Liberal doorstep, and to the doorsteps of the bankers and corporate CEOs that exert incredible influence in support of these hikes and cuts to social programs.

As geographer David Harvey at Occupy London said, "We need to mobilize in such a way that we can genuinely threaten major commercial and financial interests."

That might make some uncomfortable, but this is the predicament we are in. The statistics are plain for all to see and not worth repeating here, but over the past few decades, the rich have been increasingly threatening the well-being of the poor and working classes while they amass record profits.

Students, the poor and working people have been under attack by commercial and financial interests for too long. It's time that we seriously fight back.

Pop Culture Queers



BY CHRISTOPHER TAN

ACROSS

1. This performer may be more notable for her wacky fashion statements, but this week she makes the puzzle for all of the great work she does for the LGBT community. (2 words)

4. While he may appear to be a closeted gay man, this animated TV sycophant has been described by his creators as "Burns-sexual."

7. Due to the non-simulated sex shot in this film, Sook-Yin Lee almost faced being fired from her job as a CBC show host. She kept her job, however when the public rallied behind her. Go Canada!

11. Coming in second in *Out* magazine's 2007 list of most "powerful gay men and women in America," this silver fox keeps much of his personal life under wraps in order to maintain journalistic neutrality. (2 words)

12. He's Gandalf *and* Magneto. Get over it. (2 words)

15. Ironically, this gay TV star is best known for his role as a chauvinistic womanizer with enough notches on his belt to make David Duchovny blush. (3 words)

16. This woman was the first widely known person to undergo sex reassignment surgery. (2 words)

DOWN

2. When J.K. Rowling outed this wizard after the *Harry Potter* series was finished, some saw it as a non-canon publicity stunt, while others applauded her for showing young readers that someone's sexuality doesn't define their character.

3. This queen gave us *Drag Race* and *Supermodel of the World*. I have one thing to say: "Sashay shante."

5. Almost all major western cities host one of these. Montreal's takes place in mid-August. Sao Paulo holds the world record for the largest one in the 2006 *Guinness Book of World Records* (2 words)

6. This film won three Oscars in 2005, including Best Director for Ang Lee. (2 words)

8. In addition to talk show host, this gal can add J.C. Penney spokesperson to her resume. Pretty impressive considering that she used to work down at the store level before her fame. (2 words)

9. We have this internationally syndicated sex advice columnist to thank for the It Gets Better project—while Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum can thank him for the new meaning of his last name. (2 words)

10. You can catch this recently out actor as the gay ghost Chad in *American Horror Story*. (2 words)

13. This actress plays the villain Sue Sylvester on *Glee* (2 words)

14. From the same show as 4-Across. When the creators announced that a character would come out in 2005, one bookie saw so much money being put on this chain-smoking twin that he stopped accepting bets on her altgether.

LETTERS@THELINKNEWSPAPER.CA

The Link's letters and opinions policy: The deadline for letters is 4 p.m. on Friday before the issue prints. *The Link* reserves the right to verify your identity via telephone or email. We reserve the right to refuse letters that are libellous, sexist, homophobic, racist or xenophobic. The limit is 400 words. If your letter is longer, it won't appear in the paper. Please include your full name, weekend phone number, student ID number and program of study. The comments in the letters and opinions section do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board.

The 'Us' and 'Them' Divide

I am writing in response to two articles, one tackling the tuition protest and the other, homelessness in the Occupy movement. ("Bigger Is Better?" and "Out in the Cold," respectively, Vol. 32, Iss. 20)

While addressing unique issues, I couldn't help but sense a similar voice in both, one which created a division between an 'us,' a valiant group 'fighting for the cause' in a true way, and the 'other,' seen to be damaging the cause, diluting the message.

In the case of the tuition protests, the 'other' were the so-called radicals, who were trying too hard to tackle "all worldly oppression" to see the 'true cause.'

But let's take a step back and see who might not be seeing the forest for the trees. These 'radicals' remind us that a tuition freeze in a situation of austerity is not much better than a tax cut, a band-aid solution to greater problems that affect our society as a whole.

Within Occupy, the 'other' was the homeless, a group that, admittedly, benefited from the camps. They were portrayed as a group that simply took advantage of the situation, helped out a bit and even handed out coffee. Not all of them were even violent!

This type of patronizing language completely ignores that violence, drugs and oppression come from all facets of society; that those students, yuppies, hippies, etc. within the movement are just as likely to bring them into the camp.

To claim that 'life skills' were developed so as to help them 'integrate into society' places them outside of society and codifies citizenship according to certain definitions of have/have-not.

This kind of language contributes to the continued criminalization of those who have found themselves pushed aside by our failing welfare state.

Students wonder why we are seen to be self-centered, even spoiled; to be honest, it's no wonder.

While focusing on the cause at hand, we don't place it in the greater context. We don't need to keep this student/others divide, and we certainly shouldn't be condemning certain forms of activism. We should never, ever criticize each other so openly—this kind of conversation should be happening between those who care.

These are your allies.

In speaking of these movements together, I think we can see that they are, in fact, completely connected. We must reject this patronizing way of seeing ourselves as 'right' and 'better' in the face of the radicals, the homeless, the oppressed, the uneducated; you don't build a movement on elitism or self-righteousness.

—Kelly Pennington
BA Urban Planning

Accept the Status Quo

Remember, students—our elected representatives in Quebec City have our best interests at heart.

When the Charest Government took $700 million in federal transfers for social and health services and instead cut taxes by an impressive 1 per cent, they did so to enrich Quebecers.

When they set their budget and increased tuition fees by 75 per cent while cutting their own contributions by 2.6 per cent, they did so to make sure that our universities were not underfunded and that we could get the best education possible.

We, as students, should not feel so entitled as to ask for 'proof' that this money will be spent responsibly. Just look at Concordia.

Our Board of Governors clearly has the best interests of the school at heart and will ensure that these funds will go to providing only the best severance packages to departing administrators. After all, they wouldn't have elected themselves if they had any doubts about their own abilities.

Also, don't forget that our leaders could very likely, possibly, probably be persuaded to direct some of this money for bursaries for students. It's not like they have a history of corruption and financial mismanagement; and even if they did, they were elected to do what they want!

Romantic notions such as 'public opinion' should not play a role in deciding the actions of our government. They were elected to be our shepherds, and we as students need to stop questioning their actions. How dare we demand participation in the creation of our own education? Who do we think we are?

So remember—when someone from the Concordia Student Union, or from any other acronym-having group, hands you a flyer for an immature, negative, malicious campaign of intimidation, ignore it.

Instead, do the mature and democratic thing; go far away from the militant in question and bury your head deep in the snow.

—Kyle McLoughlin
BA Sociology and Anthropology

Maddy Griffin for ASFA VP Social

As a close friend and fellow Council-member, Maddy Griffin's energetic and charming personality has never ceased to amaze me. She has the ability to get along and work well with anybody she meets.

For the past year and a half, Griffin's involvement and dedication to the Arts and Science Federation of Associations has stayed strong and continues to improve.

As a past frosh leader and current member of ASFA's Social Committee, she knows exactly what it takes to make an event successful.

However, Griffin's expertise doesn't just stop at the social aspect; as an independent Councillor, she sits on five different ASFA committees, including Academic, Policy Review and Student Request. Talk about staying involved!

By already being a part of the inner workings of ASFA, Griffin has all the necessary tools to give Arts and Science students one of the best years they've ever seen.

With her extensive experience and passion for ASFA, I have no doubt in my mind that Griffin will do an amazing job as the next VP Social.

This girl's energy and enthusiasm will get you psyched for every single event!

With campaigning well on its way, Griffin has been responding to student concerns with the upmost detail, so please do not hesitate to contact her with any questions.

I hope you will make the right decision and vote for Maddy Griffin between Feb. 15 and Feb. 17!

—Yasmeen Zahar
BSc Environmental Science

ASFA Apathy

The Arts and Science Federation of Associations elections have arrived and the time for Arts & Science students to choose their next executive has come.

Do you care? You should.

Before my involvement with the Concordia Student Union, I was on an Arts & Science member association for three years – under three different ASFA executives. This experience really taught me how important having a strong and dedicated team in office is.

A weak ASFA executive doesn't just mean a few less ASFA initiatives throughout the year—all Arts and Science member associations rely on the executive to function properly. This means the responsibility the executives carry is huge; if they don't do their jobs, member associations can't do theirs either.

Now, it is important to keep in mind that we're all students. No one is perfect, and yes, mistakes will happen. However, if you can get an honest and hard-working team whose true motivation is to help students, the rest will work itself out.

I've always found the best way to determine whether this is the case is through promises made during campaigning.

How feasible are their promises (really)? Have they looked into (not just thought about) how to achieve them? Have they looked to the organization's past for insight? Does what they're promising even make sense?

Unfeasible promises are lies. It's that simple. It's generally easy to tell which candidates are making flashy promises just to win votes, and that's dishonest.

Something candidates often forget is that we're not expecting miracles; we're expecting representatives who will aim high, work their hardest, and deliver the results to the best of their abilities.

What candidates are promising also gives good insight into how well they know their school, how it operates and how to navigate the ever more complex bureaucracy behind the scenes.

At the end of the day, the less flashy promises that actually get achieved are worth more than the empty words that would've been really cool.

So, I implore every Arts and Science student to take the time and look into every promise being made to you. Give the posters more than a passing glance—take the time to think about what each promise means and why it's being made.

Dishonest candidates bank on students being too apathetic to hold them accountable, and the only way to reverse that attitude is to prove them wrong.

—Melissa Fuller
CSU VP Loyola & Services
BA Communication Studies

Caroline Bourbonnière for ASFA President

I am writing to express my support for Caroline Bourbonnière's bid for the Presidency of the Arts and Science Federation of Associations.

Over the past year, Caroline has represented Political Science students in her capacity as VP Communications of the Political Science Student Association with an enviable work ethic and a positive attitude.

I believe Caroline is the best candidate for president, as she possesses the strengths and dedication an organization like ASFA needs to allow Arts and Science students to make the most of their undergraduate experience at Concordia.

Her experience as president of Volunteers in Action giving out sandwiches on a regular basis to the homeless ultimately attests to her compassion and willingness to give back to the local community.

Caroline makes friends easily and has both the personality of a leader and intelligence that I believe makes her the most worthy candidate of holding the position of ASFA president in this election.

I encourage everyone to vote for Caroline Bourbonnière for President of ASFA!

—Aaron Green
Former ASFA president,
2010-11 academic year

It is with great pleasure that I support Caroline Bourbonnière in her candidacy to be president of the Arts and Sciences Federation of Associations.

Caroline is charismatic, friendly, hard working, and passionate. She is currently the VP Communications of the Political Science Students Association and has been a driving force in its success this year.

As she worked hard to bring in new speakers such as the Ambassadors of Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt this March for an Arab Spring speaker panel.

She has also demonstrated strong leadership qualities in Volunteers in Action, where she currently holds the title of president. Every week, Caroline and her volunteers walk the streets of Montreal to provide the homeless with a nutritious lunch.

She is also a strong advocate for women's rights, and will be hosting Women's Month in March, organizing workshops, and inviting inspiring speakers.

She has recently been selected to represent Concordia at the 2012 University Scholars Leadership Symposium in Bali, Indonesia. Caroline puts her 150 per cent into every project she takes on, and that is why ASFA would be an excellent fit for her.

—Teresa Seminara
ASFA VP Academic & Loyola Affairs
2010-11

As President of Concordia's Political Science Student Association, I endorse Caroline Bourbonnière in her race for Arts and Science Federation of Associations president.

I believe she's the most qualified candidate and will raise its standards of excellence. With passion, she has been key in the PSSA's success this year, filling up our wine and cheese events, bringing in world-renowned speakers and Middle Eastern ambassadors.

Caroline is a strong advocate for women's rights, and is organizing Women's Month. She will be bringing inspirational and empowered women, such as the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, to come speak to the PSSA and her Concordia Student Union club Volunteers in Actions of which she is president.

At the same time, she provides support to the homeless by delivering home-made food every week, and collaborates with various non-governmental organizations.

I urge you to consider Caroline Bourbonnière's platform and posters to build your opinion.

Does she have what it takes to be president? Yes. She's got a fiery passion and the strong leadership skills to make ASFA yours.

—Pier-Luc Therrien
Political Science Student Association
President

Olivia Taddio for ASFA VP External & Sustainibility

I would like to offer my full support for Olivia Taddio for VP External and Sustainability in these upcoming Arts and Science Federation of Associations elections.

I have had the honour of personally working with Taddio and can attest to her skills and abilities that make her an excellent candidate—one that any executive team would be lucky to work with.

Firstly, Taddio has the instinctual leadership qualities necessary for the position. This is demonstrated through her strong background and experience working both with and for the student body as VP Social for the Concordia Association for Students in English and on the Social Committee with the current ASFA executive team.

Not only has she excelled in these two positions, but they have provided her with the knowledge and know-how to fulfill the role of VP External and Sustainability for next year's ASFA executive.

In addition to her invaluable experience with member associations at Concordia as well as with ASFA, Olivia's strong candidate platform truly is one of her biggest strengths.

She is a strong advocate for facilitating fundamental inter-faculty relationships that will promote a stronger Concordia community.

Her proposed sustainability initiatives, including a new water fountain with bottle counters and sustainability workshops are both extremely innovative and will provide Concordia with a means of continuing to enhance their environmental contribution.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly believe that Olivia Taddio encompasses all of the essential characteristics necessary for VP External & Sustainability.

I am confident that she will work tirelessly to assure that issues of sustainability are at the forefront of students' concerns and activities.

—Megh Atwal
Specialization in Psych,

Nick Santella for ASFA VP Communications

The first time I met Nick Santella, I noticed he was very knowledgeable with respect to modern web tools. He was using Joomla and every other social network to the fullest capacity in marketing his own projects.

Not only this, but I was highly impressed when we got on the topic of his website. After he showed me what he was capable of creating, the impression I had was one of excellence and professionalism.

This was the general vibe I got from Santella the more I hung out with him. I could see from this moment on that he was extremely enthusiastic about getting his personal projects out to the world.

Not only is Santella perfect for the Arts and Science Federation of Associations' VP Communications position, but I truly believe that he will not disappoint.

Rather, he will excel, and by this I mean in any field he decides to apply himself to.

Make no mistake, his techniques and background will be of great use to ASFA and the students of Concordia.

All in all, Nick is no doubt the best candidate for VP Communications

—Charles Bourassa
BA Philosophy,
BA Western Society & Culture

Nick Santella is definitely qualified when it comes to website and graphic design. He's helped me on numerous occasions over the years with designing various sites or editing pictures with Photoshop.

I think he's a great choice to update and revamp the Arts and Science Federation of Associations website.

He's creative with his designs and is very in-tune with the latest technologies and methods, meaning ASFA will be getting the very best, cutting-edge stuff.

He's also easy to work with and will no doubt be able to teach others to do the same and quickly get them up to speed.

—Andrew Maggio
BA Journalism

Charlie Brenchley for ASFA President

I am proud and excited to endorse Charlie Brenchley as President of the Arts and Science Federation of Associations for the 2012-13 academic year.

I have had the opportunity to work alongside him on our department association, the School of Community and Public Affairs Student Association, where his contributions have been essential to the success of our executive team.

On the executive of the SCPASA, Brenchley has worked extensively over two of our annual budgets, has engaged in bylaw reforms, has organized our biggest social events, and has collaborated with our department to reach a shared-space agreement for our association.

He has facilitated executive meetings and represented us at the ASFA Council with diligence, and care. Representatives from other member associations have told me that this year he has been the voice of reason on Council during the sometimes tedious discussions, and I don't doubt it.

Brenchley knows the ins and outs of ASFA having been on a member association, and he is also familiar with the dynamics of ASFA Council and its standing committees.

He has proven to be an organized, hardworking, and a reliable executive. He is personable, a great listener and knows how to bring groups of people together.

Brenchley's dedication to students and the issues that affect them are inspiring to me and to those who have had the privilege to work with him.

I strongly believe that Brenchley's knowledge, work ethic, leadership skills, and commitment to his peers would make him the ideal candidate for this position. On Feb. 15, 16 and 17, don't forget to cast your ballot for Charlie Brenchley.

A vote for Brenchley is a vote for dedication, leadership and experience.

—Melanie Hotchkiss
Executive Secretary -
School of Community & Public Affairs
Arts & Science Councillor –
Concordia Student Union

Rachel Feldman for ASFA VP Finance

Although she is running uncontested, I would like to express that I believe we are about to bear witness to the best VP Finance the Arts and Science Federation of Associations has seen in a while in Rachel Feldman.

This is not to knock Alexa Newman, the VP Finance for 2010-11, or our current VP Finance, Laura Gomez, who have also done a great job.

However, after having worked alongside Feldman for four years, in a job that involved working directly with the public, while making sure to maintain a balanced budget (no thanks to her predecessor, who broke the bank), I have seen nothing but good things from her.

She has all the right qualities to be ASFA's VP Finance. She's organized, responsible, strict, strong-willed, highly intelligent and dedicated to her work.

With Feldman as ASFA's VP Finance, you can expect a balanced budget, cheques to be issued within the minimum required time limit and high levels of transparency and accountability.

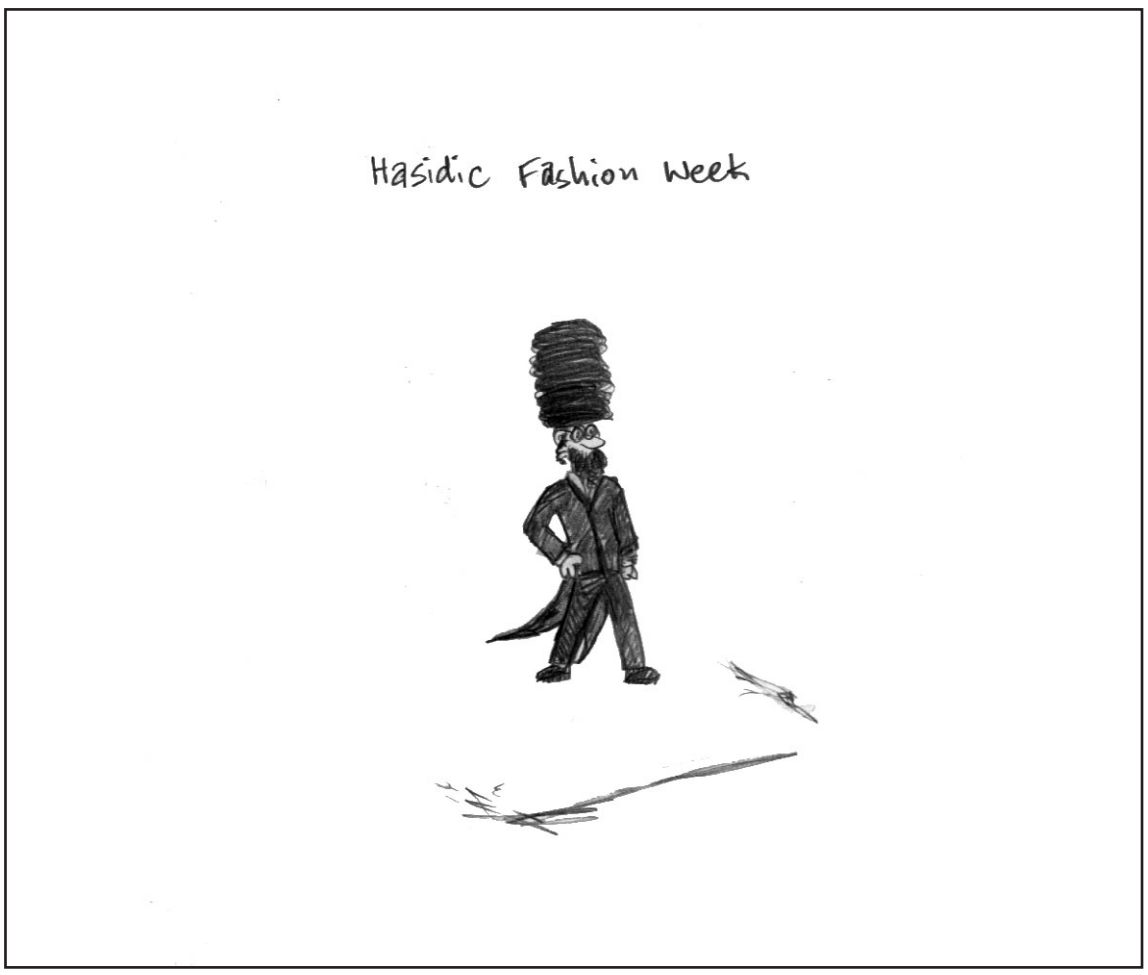
There's a reason there are no candidates are running against this powerhouse candidate… They wouldn't stand a chance.

Rachel Feldman for ASFA VP Finance—all day, every day!

—Carmine Niro
BA Political Science

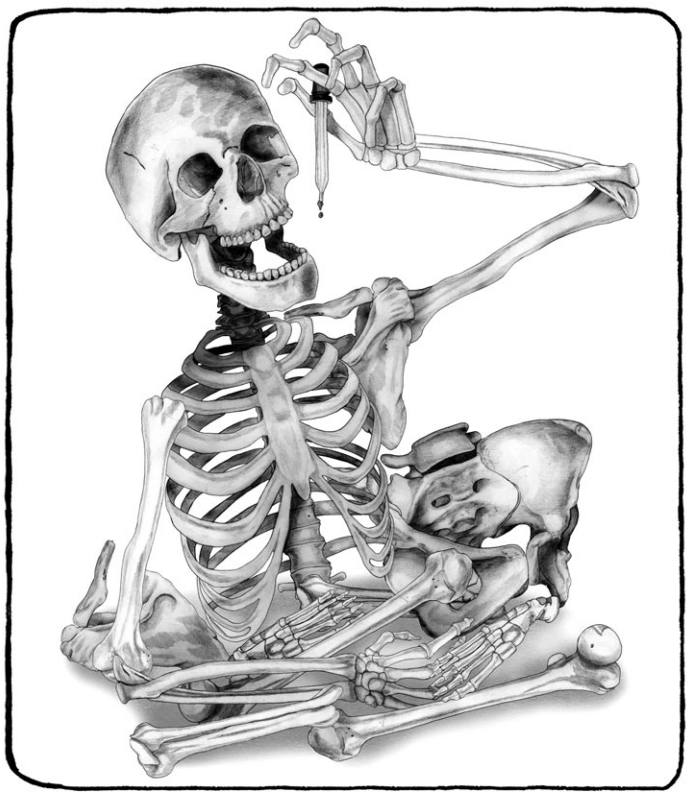
Barton Flats

COMIC JONATHAN WOODS



Tremendous Tales

by Christopher Olson



"One drop will stop the fever. Two drops will cure the plague. Three drops will leave behind only bones."

False Knees

COMIC JOSHUA BARKMAN

Nah'msayin?

The Tyranny of St. Valentine

Men! Women! Singletons! Lend me your ears—or, perhaps, more specifically, your hearts. I come to tell you of a great tragedy, one that has gone undiscussed, unrevealed to the public eye for too long. For decades innocent humans have suffered under the tyranny of St. Valentine, their pain untalked about in the media, their misery shunned.

I speak, of course, about people in relationships. The lonely onlies of the world, thanks to the 'single lobby,' have been able to paint Valentine's Day as primarily tough on single people.

"Oh no," they cry. "We have no one to love us! Instead we have to gorge ourselves on chocolate and candy and hope that the sugar buzz will act as a simulacrum, however brief, of the feelings of true love."

Little do they know, however, that making a candy food baby is actually a lot better than being in a relationship; the good part is usually just as fleeting, the high is almost as high, and the comedown is significantly less painful.

Plus, the love-replacing poison of your choice is just a discount candy bin away.

If you're in a relationship Feb. 14, however, the real pernicious aspect is how Valentine's works to undermine true romance.

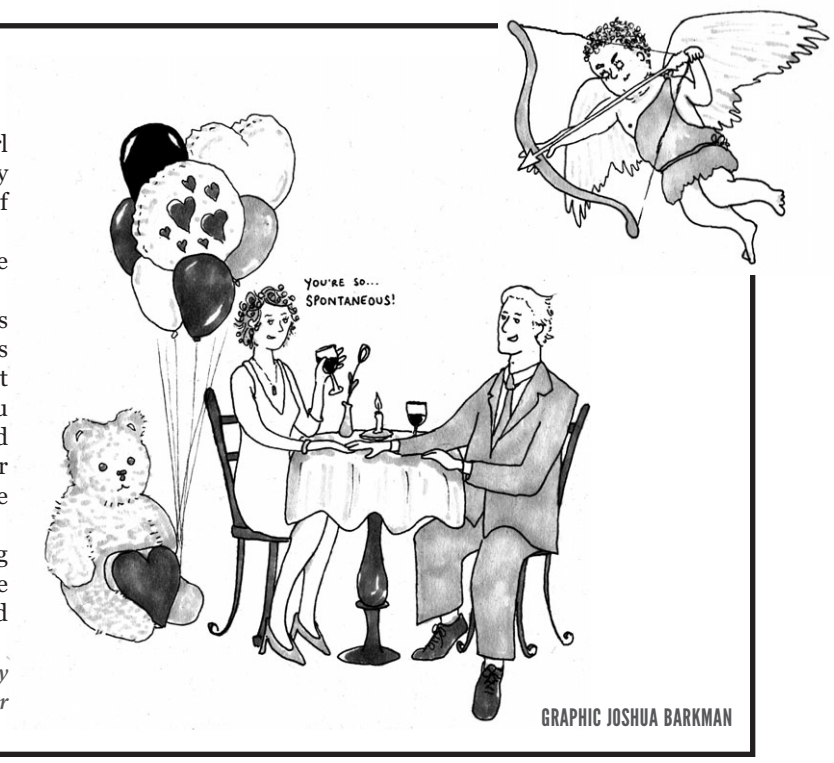
Real love and all that jazz is spontaneous! It's about surprises, the unexpected and the unusual. Getting a bunch of roses or a pearl necklace in mid-February every year is pretty much the death of love.

There's a simple solution: we abolish Valentine's Day. (Easy.)

The upshot? People in couples are forced to fend for themselves romantically. If your significant other isn't capable of surprising you by romantically blowing your mind at least once a year on a day of their choosing, probably find someone else who is.

And single people? Spreading their complaining out over the other 12 months of the year, instead of concentrating it all in February.

–Alex Manley
Copy Editor



GRAPHIC JOSHUA BARKMAN

AIN'T NO PARTY LIKE A #6PARTY

editorial

When a contingent of 23 students took over the sixth floor of McGill University's James Administration Building last Tuesday, their actions initially seemed warranted.

The referendum last November regarding the fee levies for campus radio station CKUT and the Quebec Public Interest Research Group saw students vote overwhelmingly in favour of shifting the opt-out method from online to in-person, effectively making it more difficult for students to opt out of the fee levies.

Student money funds these organizations, so it makes sense that the question of their existence remains in the hands of the students.

When the McGill administration chose to overturn the results of the referendum due to a perceived lack of clarity in the referendum question's phrasing—without consultation from the students who actually voted—it was easy to sympathize with the occupiers' cause.

But after thinking about the occupation a bit more, it's clear that they didn't choose the best way to get their message across.

Regardless of the financial issues with the occupation (To get an idea of the cost, consider how much security was required to keep an eye on the students for the 118 hour occupation, and then think about how much security guards get paid per hour, and then multiply that by 1.5, to account for overtime pay), the occupiers successfully united a large portion of the campus in the fight *against* their cause.

When something as daunting as the tuition hike looms over the heads of Quebec students, the last thing any of us need is to be pitted against each other by an administration that couldn't care less.

Yes, it was not the administration's job to overturn a student referendum, and yes, they should've left the task to the Students' Society of McGill University (who were already conducting an investigation into the questionable wording of the referendum questions), a union whose job it is to represent students.

But occupying the Administration Building and shutting it down as a result is not the best way to get your demands met.

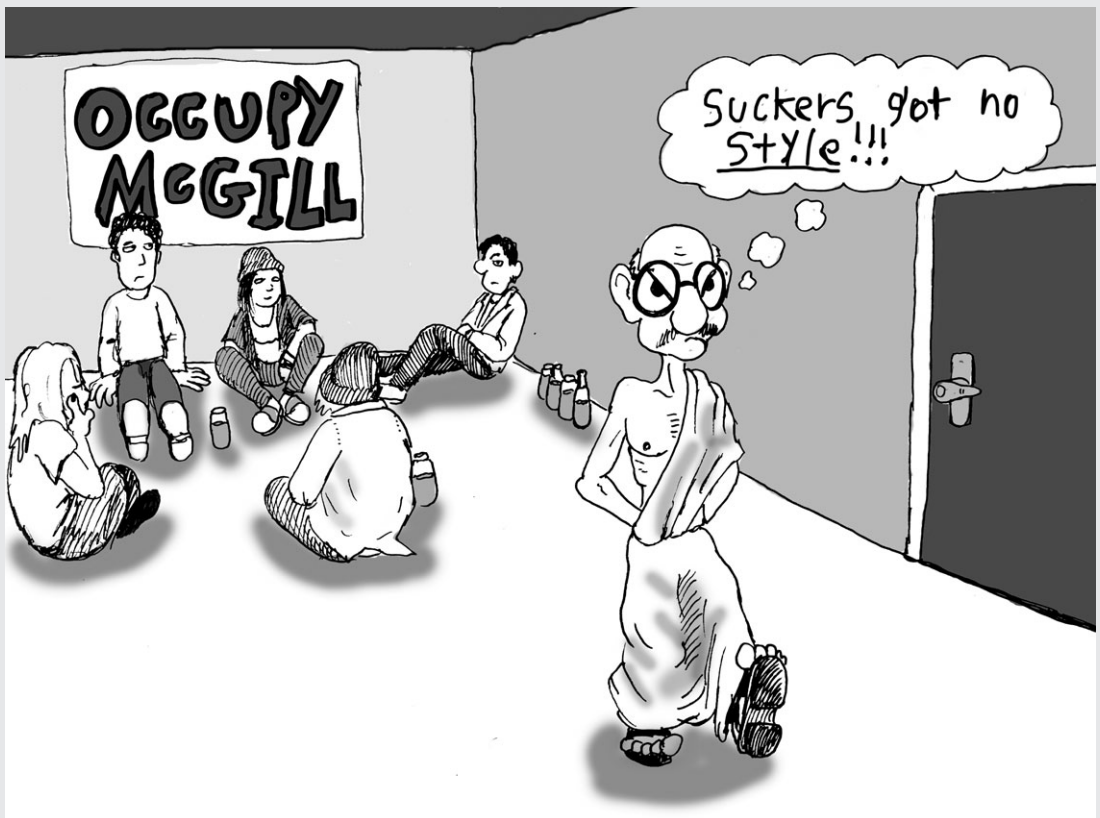
The Feb. 12 eviction of the last remaining occupiers, leaving with their demands unmet, showed us this.

There are better ways to have your voice heard; ways that don't result in a large portion of students gleefully waiting for the moment the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal finally busts down the doors to haul you out of the building. This isn't the 1960s, and it isn't time for another Computer Riot-esque situation, especially over something like a better opt-out method.

When the occupiers were finally evicted in the wee hours of Sunday morning, all they had to show for their efforts were a few banners and an impressively constructed pulley system for getting food to the sixth floor.

They will undoubtedly face disciplinary action, especially given the mass concern expressed by those opposed to the occupation that the school has become a "consequence-free environment."

Sunday evening, McGill Provost Anthony Masi and VP Administration and Finance Michael Di Grappa issued a temporary protocol for demonstrations and protests on campus.



GRAPHIC ERIC BENT

The protocol will tide the university over until McGill officially responds to Dean of Law Daniel Jutras' report regarding the events of Nov. 10, but it's unclear when that will be. It's quite possible the protocol will still be in effect for the student strikes planned for March.

That's worrisome, given the content of the protocol. While the phrasing used ("Demonstrations and protests may occur and will not be interfered with unless...") might suggest a willingness to put up with future student protests, the guidelines are troublingly restrictive.

Should a future protest "impede the conduct of University activities," "obstruct access to, or egress from, buildings" (here's looking at you, sit-ins) or even so much as "continue beyond the normal operating hours of the University facilities in which they occur," they're almost certainly going to be shut down, and you can bet the McGill admin won't wait 118 hours before acting.

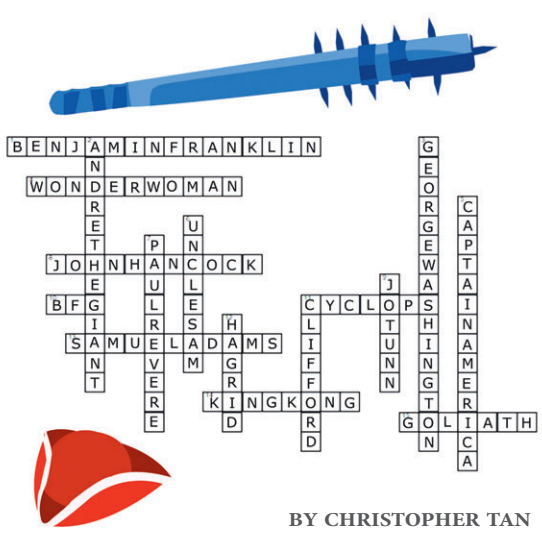
The new guidelines are incredibly constraining and will not only ensure nothing like the so-called #6party will happen again, but that any future protest will be looked at much more stringently.

So, let's recap: not only did the occupiers not receive what they demanded, they also, as a small group of students acting unilaterally, brought down draconian policy changes that can be loosely interpreted on a student body of 25,000-plus—for an indefinite period that may last through the most important student protests of the last several years.

This is not meant to downplay the poor treatment the occupiers suffered at the hands of the McGill administration—restricting access to working plumbing and food is cruel and reprehensible—but the occupiers should have considered the possibility that such things would happen before they chose to speak on behalf of all students using tactics that are best left for situations much more dire than an opt-out method.

There are bigger things at stake these days, and a divided campus under the shadow of an angry administration is one ill-equipped for the fight.

-Erin Sparks,
Photo Editor



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